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A Mosfilm Production, Black and White with English commentary. Directed by: Mikhail Romm. Awarded the Golden Dove at Leipzig International Film Festival 1965.

Consult the above-mentioned Cinemas or your local press for further information and programme times.

*Above left and centre: "The Criminal will not escape".
Left: "Ordinary Fascism".*

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All enquiries to:

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SIGHT^{AND}SOUND

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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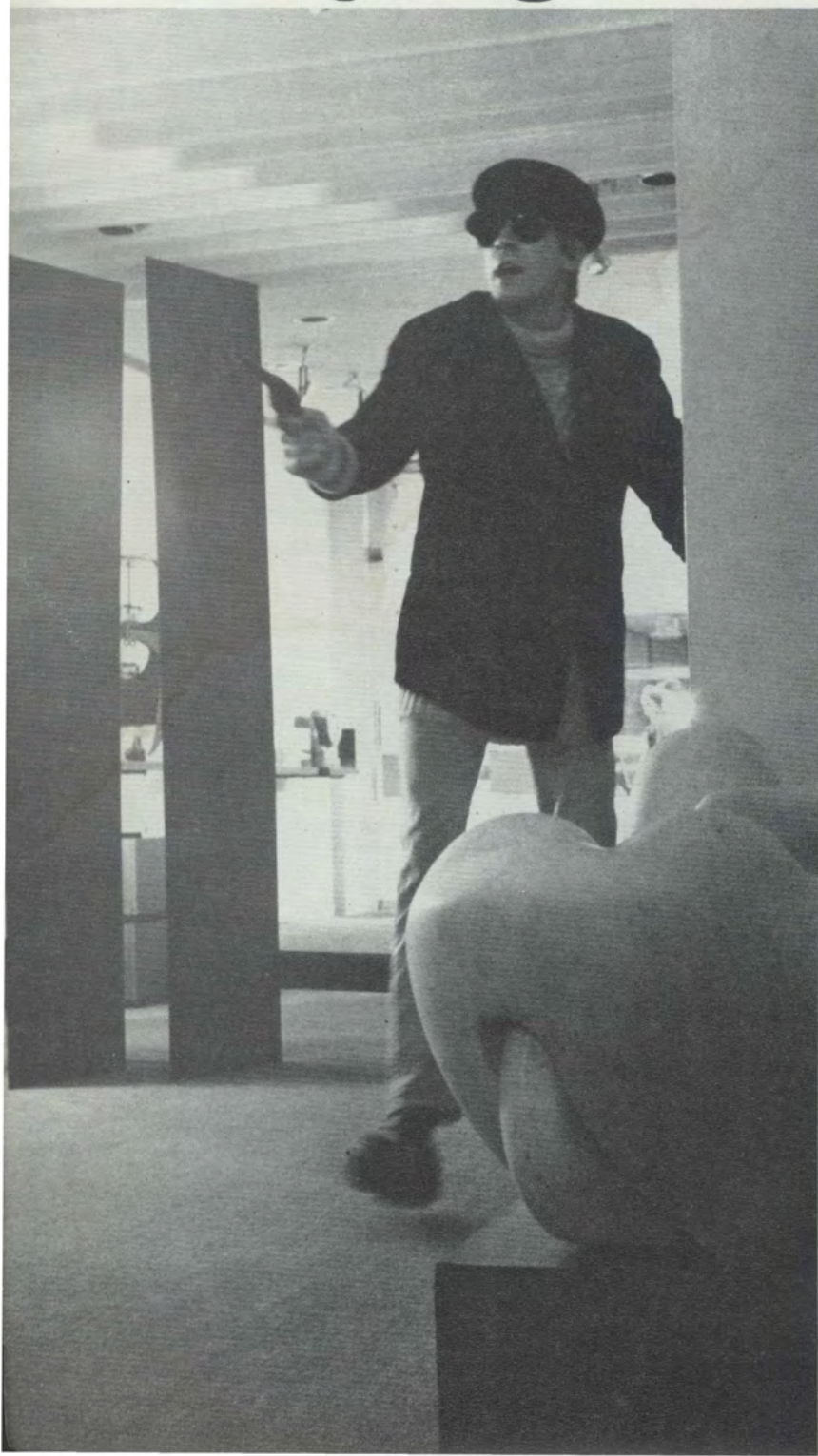
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THE

ALPHAVILLE *of* ADMASS

**OR how we learned to stop
worrying** AND LOVE THE BOOM / PHILIP FRENCH



"Coming to New York from the muted mistiness of London, as I regularly do, is like travelling from a monotone antique shop to a Technicolor bazaar."
—Kenneth Tynan: "Holiday" December 1960

"Ancient elegance and new opulence are all tangled up in a dazzling blur of op and pop . . . In a once sedate world of faded splendor, everything new, uninhibited and kinky is blooming at the top of London life."
—"Time" April 1966

THE FIRST OF THESE COMMENTS coincided with the London première of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*; the second appeared just after the New York screening of *Morgan*. Between the two films, as between these two assessments of London, there is a world of difference and a whirl of indifference. Something has changed in a country and its cinema. (As an admirer of *High Noon* said when he saw *Born Free*, a funny thing happened on the way to the Foreman.)

The word renaissance is freely bandied about at home and abroad. The British cinema is "undergoing a renaissance" Alberto Moravia told *Time*, and Miss Pauline Kael, no irresponsible anglophile, wrote a couple of months ago that "even in England there has been something that passes for a renaissance." Yet one resists the term as far as one can. Partly because it catches in the throat in the same way that the phrase "New Elizabethans" gums up the lips; partly because a term that has sufficed for one three century period in the visual arts has been invoked every couple of years about some national film industry since the war.

British film critics indeed are forever proclaiming a renaissance, and this time they must be heartened at finding that for once they're not standing alone. Yet each impending new birth has usually turned out to be a hysterical pregnancy. Whenever the cautious are tempted into optimism they usually live to regret it. During 1962 for instance Mrs. Penelope Gilliatt had seen no sign of a rebirth, and picked only one British film (*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*) among the year's ten best. Yet she felt something stirring, and wrote (and I would forbear from quoting her were it not for the fact that her end-of-the-year comments are preserved between hard covers):

I'm looking forward to the thrillers we are going to produce next year; directors like Cliff Owen (who made the pungent *A Prize of Arms*) are pulling them up by the bootstraps. I'm longing to see Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* and Joan Littlewood's *Sparrows Can't Sing*, and I can't wait for the movie of *One Way Pendulum* . . . The ice-floe of the British cinema really is breaking up.

In a sense the ice-floe of the British cinema did begin to break up in 1963, though not in the way that Mrs. Gilliatt anticipated. The thaw began and, to move the political metaphor a little further East, the time was ready for a thousand flowers to bloom. That they would be lilies of the field no one could have anticipated at the time, any more than one could have seen that these lilies would spin—money. If the British films of the previous four years appeared to have been guided by the editors of the *New Left Review*, Richard Hoggart and the Opies, then those of the three years that followed looked increasingly as if they had been made under the personal supervision of the regius professor of Applied Camp at the Royal College of Art.

1963 then can be seen as a turning point on the crooked road from the wheelwright's shop to the boutique. It was the year in which the drift North of the moviemakers was arrested and in which they began to do a social as well as geographical

about face. The future historian might see the move enacted in symbolical terms in *Billy Liar*. In retrospect the highpoint of the picture is that nouvelle-vagueish promenade through the Northern high street by Julie Christie as Liz, harbinger of short skirts, discothèques, op art, the pill and what you will. (One almost expected to see Arthur Seaton, bearded and carrying a scythe, disappear over the nearest slagheap.) And when Liz caught the midnight train to London at the end, the camera may have remained to follow Billy on his lonely, elegiac return to the family semi-detached, but spiritually the film-makers had a one-way ticket to ride south with Miss Christie.

* * *

Actually the provincial realism of the 1959–63 period had hit its zenith fairly early on with Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, still far and away the best feature film in a realistic vein made in this country. It had also reached its nadir in *A Taste of Honey* or, as some would have it, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. If you think that what was fundamentally wrong about the films of this period was their phoney lyricism, then it was the former; if however you consider it to be the callowness of their social and political thinking, it was obviously the latter. Or maybe it was just a matter of heavy-handedness. Whatever way you care to look at it, Tony Richardson takes the prize; and he was first off the mark in 1963 with *Tom Jones*, the film that played a crucial part in shaping the 'new' (or 'nouvelle' new) cinema. A number of people (including admittedly myself) greatly overrated this picture when it appeared through a combination of chauvinism, surprise, a desire for something fresh, and a regard for John Osborne's screenplay. Although this picture opened some months after *Dr. No* its initial impact was much greater, and actually has more in common with the later Bond pictures than the curiously diffident beginning of that cycle. *Tom Jones* certainly seemed a liberating picture at the time, but instead has proved to be a prison, albeit one without bars. Its lack of form, its air of slovenly improvisation, its tasteless eclecticism, its inchoate and inappropriate social comment—these have been the hallmark of the modish British cinema ever since.

The other film of 1963 which showed the way things were going was *This Sporting Life*. This ambitious but far from successful attempt to dig in up North, to use the experience gained from the previous five or six years, was the grounded whale left when the first English 'new wave' retreated, just as the delayed British Lion films (kept waiting until 64–65 to get on the circuits) were the stranded minnows. Lindsay Anderson had written in 1957 about the porters in his Covent Garden film *Every Day Except Christmas*:

These good and friendly faces deserve a place of pride on the screens of their country; and I will fight for the notion of community which will give it to them.

By 1963 however his views had changed somewhat:

Throughout *This Sporting Life* we were aware that we were not making a film about anything representative; we were making a film about something unique. We were not making a film about a "worker" but about an extraordinary (and therefore more deeply significant) man, and about an extraordinary relationship. We were not, in a word, making sociology.

Indeed he was not. If the earlier pictures suggested Mass Observation, *This Sporting Life* was delving into abnormal psychology. It was almost Krafft-Ebing in a rugger shirt, or Wakefield Trinity with Richard Harris playing all three parts.

The not wholly unexpected commercial failure of *This Sporting Life* and the surprise success of *Tom Jones* were to

determine the future development of British pictures decisively. As *Time* wrote in the summer of 1963 (before *Tom Jones* had been shown in the States, and in an article that bracketed Richardson with other "inspired pioneers" of world cinema including Buñuel, Antonioni, Ray, Resnais and Fellini):

Moviegoers are getting a bit bugged by the same scummy old roofscape and the eternal kitchen-sinkdrome. They sometimes find it a bit hard to believe that things are really all that bad in Merry England. Yet at their best the British protest pictures have served up great juicy hunks of local colour.

It is still possible for Americans to respond to the exotic British hinterland, and one notes that this very month an American publisher is advertising a new book as "a brilliant, bawdy novel, the wildest yet to come out of the steaming back streets of working-class England in a decade of literary revolt." Generally speaking, however, they have found the product of the last couple of years more palatable, being more engaged by people from a working-class background than in one (this goes for the British too); and the chance one once saw of Americans developing a permanent taste for a new genre, "The Northern", now seems remote. There had been a pretty obvious clash between the conventional picture of the British (via received ideas and the British Travel Association advertisements—the so-called "thatch-roofed Spitfire" image) and that which the proletarian movies conveyed. But it did help to prepare them, directly and dialectically, for those that followed, as did life itself and particularly those three key events of 1963—the Profumo Affair, the Great Train Robbery, and the Beatles. And now in April 1966, *Time* writes:

LAURENCE HARVEY'S JOE LAMPTON. *LIFE AT THE TOP* (1965) MEETS *ROOM AT THE TOP* (1958).



There is not one London scene, but dozens. Each one is a dazzling gem, a medley of checkered sunglasses, and delightfully quaint pay boxes, a blend of "flash" American, polished Continental and robust old English influences that mixes and merges in London today.

And if you think that this sounds less like the London we love, loathe and live in than one of a number of British films, you would of course be right. For *Time* goes straight on to say:

The result is a slapdash comedy not unlike those directed for the screen by Britain's own Tony (Tom Jones) Richardson or Czech emigré Karel (Morgan) Reisz, and filmed by director Richard (Help!) Lester, a fugitive from Philadelphia.

As Dr. Johnson might have said, a man who is tired of London is tired of *Life*. But what London is this? Not the London of Karel (We Are the Lambeth Boys) Reisz or Tony (Mamma Don't Allow) Richardson; nor should one have to invoke the London of Edward (Saved) Bond to redress the imbalance created by James (Goldfinger) Bond.

* * *

In *Time's* conjunction of London and the British cinema we have something that goes beyond the normal ideas of life imitating art. Here we have a curious interplay (not to say confusion) between art and a sort of life with which we have recently become acquainted though to which we have not yet necessarily become accustomed. Robert Rauschenberg's dictum "I act in the gap between art and life" is perhaps the most frequently quoted of any contemporary artist. But now we must ask: what art? what life? It is increasingly difficult to establish just what is that area of reality upon which a film seeks to impose form, and back to which, in terms of our own experience, we can refer it. It is the kind of problem that faces us when we turn the pages of a colour supplement and only with difficulty distinguish between the editorial content and the advertisements. Artists work for ad agencies, produce art that draws on the techniques and iconography of advertising, and then, like Peter Blake (for Wills cigars), are drawn back into advertisements which are indistinguishable from Lord Snowdon's colour magazine photographs.

Still, that London is "a swinging city" (the swinging city) and that British films are an expression of it, is, however factitious it may seem to more temperate natives, no mere aberration of *Time* magazine. It is as widely acclaimed abroad as it is accepted at home. Accepted of course does not necessarily mean the same as believed, and it certainly doesn't mean experienced. Yet it is not my purpose here to consider the origin or significance of this weird phenomenon other than as it affects the British cinema. The movies are, for reasons not entirely economic, peculiarly at the mercy of the zeitgeist. Naturally a good artist will resist it or put it to his own use, if he can and if he is aware of it. But currently a large part of our cinema and the "swinging scene" are almost inseparable.

There are a good many people who have a vested interest in the continuing success of the present vogue, in the notion of London as the Alphaville of Admass. In the sense that everything from Mary Quant dresses through toy James Bond Aston Martins to *Darling* affects the balance of payments situation, we all have. National prestige and economics are very much bound up in this, and not for the first time. (Oddly enough, though, the direct expression of chauvinism, which declined with the falling off of British war films, is now found only in spy movies: e.g. the elevation of Bond over the C.I.A., the shooting of the interfering American agents in *The Ipcress File*; and it is little more than harmless compensation fantasy.) A chilling instance of a previous occasion when national prestige was at stake can be found in a *Sequence* editorial of 1948:

Mr. Harold Wilson was recently recorded by Gaumont-British News in the act of presenting Miss Margaret Lockwood with a heavy, silver-plated ornament, thus bestowing official sanction to the British people's judgment that Miss Lockwood is their finest actress. Indeed, as Mr. Wilson smilingly remarked, this comes to the same thing as saying "the finest actress in the world." "For" (as near as makes no matter we quote his own words) "there is no doubt that the British film industry today is first and foremost among the film industries of the world."

We are all acquainted with what happened to that industry in the years that followed. The basis of the industry is scarcely more sound today that it was then. So it is with some alarm that one reads in an *Evening Standard* editorial (April 19th, 1966):

By winning an Oscar as the best actress of 1965, Julie Christie has added yet another jewel to the crown which the British film industry has been so assiduously making for itself over the past few years.

For if any country is setting the pace in the highly competitive world of film-making, that country is Britain . . .

As Julie Christie and her colleagues collected their awards . . . the applause which roared for them was a tribute to the whole of the British film industry.

Let us look at some of the gems in the bejewelled crown that this pace-setting industry is said to be wearing. It is difficult to deny that the new pictures are, in the main, far better made than most British films of the past. There is a feeling for the medium, a drive, a sense of style, a freewheeling vigour, for which there are few previous parallels. These qualities are not to be despised. Yet at the same time these gains can be seen as unassimilated, or only partially understood, influences from the younger French directors and the *cinéma vérité* movement; as well as from TV commercials on which most British directors spend the greater part of their time. The feeling for the medium is often only a concern for stylishness and fashion, the vigour a desperate energy that seeks to conceal a lack of content behind a battery of tricks.

Where the conformity of the British cinema from 1958 to 1963 was a conformity of subject matter, now it is one of treatment. This undoubtedly reflects the predominant movement in our society itself, which has been from statement to style, from what people stand for to how they stand and what they stand in. It is probable that the interest of a film-maker now would be centred not upon what Jimmy Porter said but upon the shirts that his wife was ironing. This ascendancy of the visual over the verbal has social, psychological and even economic roots and consequences.

* * *

The shortcomings of the current cinema can be seen in three of its most lauded products of the past year—*Darling*, *Alfie* and *Morgan*. Together they sound like a rather staid firm of solicitors, and in a way of course, though far from staid, they are brazenly soliciting our interest in their eponymous central characters who, as presented on the screen, are among the most tedious ever inflicted upon an audience. There is a considerable discrepancy between the talents that have produced these pictures: Karel Reisz is a far better director than John Schlesinger, who in turn is infinitely superior to Lewis Gilbert. Nevertheless all three films are illustrations of the way in which a uniform style has been imposed upon disparate material. They are like middle-aged men trying to squeeze into Mod clothes. This is more cause for sorrow than anger, though a recent stage musical, *On the Level*, provoked *The Times's* drama critic to thunder that "the sight of middle-aged showmen clambering on the bandwagon of youth is one of the most contemptible the theatre has to offer."

Whatever individuality these films might have had has been, consciously or unconsciously, ironed out. Each has been furnished with cool music, which in the case of the John Dankworth scores for *Darling* and *Morgan* is not inappropriate; *Alfie* however needs Sonny Rollins on the soundtrack about as much as a Whitehall farce needs incidental music by Stockhausen. This is one aspect of the similar packaging, and is actually the reverse of the once normal commercial procedure whereby identical goods are made to appear different through individual presentation.

In its original form *Alfie* was a 1962 radio play called *Alfie Elkins and his Little Life*. It took place over a period of years from the early days of the last war until about the late Fifties, and concerned the meetings between a north country narrator (an obvious stand-in for author Bill Naughton) and Alfie (born c. 1916). It was a study of working-class Don Juanism seen against the background of a changing society, and the device of Alfie bringing the author up to date on his life was a workable convention, a bit old-fashioned perhaps but in



"ALFIE": MICHAEL CAINE AS THE WORKING CLASS DON JUAN; ELEANOR BRON AS THE DOCTOR.

keeping with the traditional morality that all Bill Naughton's work seeks to establish. The film on the other hand takes place in no discernible span of time, and has no form to replace the original narrative style or sustain a moral theme which now seems laboured, tacked on. Alfie's method of addressing the audience is inconsistently maintained—sometimes he is talking directly, sometimes he is giving a running (and predictive) commentary, and sometimes he is not there at all. But when he is absent we are given a caricatured view of married life consistent with his view and consequently in contradiction to Naughton's. The result is that his final rejection has no meaning at all—Alfie has not aged (unless the point is that you are past it in your early twenties) and there is no adequate view opposed to his, other than a sentimentally contrived glimpse he has of the christening of an ex-mistress's child. Yet in the mélange of advertising colour, the slow motion pursuit of his little son in a park, the hip music, the putting on of airs and the slipping off of clothes, the ingratiating, button-holing narration, who is to notice?

* * *

Darling likewise has a totally unconvincing form (the heroine supposedly confiding her memoirs to a women's magazine) and much grander pretensions to social comment. Once again no time seems to pass for any of the characters, though what the film seeks to capture, invites you to come behind the façade of, is a society in transition. As the film opens, the advertisements for Diana Scott's memoirs go up over an Oxfam poster and there is some legitimate if coarsely handled fun at the expense of a fund-raising party. The effect of this is no more than a fashionable gesture. Where *Darling* aims at verisimilitude its success is intermittent (which is admittedly more than one can say of the London sequences of *Life at the Top*) and its often brilliantly chosen locations serve to emphasise, rather than conceal, the general air of fantasy of its riches-to-riches, poor little princess story. Now this is odd, though unfortunately typical of the current cinema, for one would have predicted that the shift in attention from the provincial working-class to the metropolitan middle-class would have seen the film-makers once more operating within terms of their own experience. Apparently not so.

Unlike *Darling* and *Alfie*, which finish up that way, *Morgan* actually sets out to be a fantasy. The film does anyway; the play didn't. In David Mercer's 1962 TV comedy *A Suitable Case for Treatment* (now the film's sub-title), Morgan Delt

was thirty-five. But like the fortyish Alfie, so aged a Morgan would have been almost an *Umberto D* figure by the mid-1960s. As played by David Warner in the film he is, one would guess, in his early twenties.

In the play Morgan is a working-class novelist, divorced by his upper middle-class wife for habitual adultery so she can marry a literary agent, and he finishes up in the arms of a sensible telephonist. In the movie he is a painter, divorced for mental cruelty; the wife's boy friend has become an art dealer, and Morgan is ultimately committed to a lunatic asylum. Underneath the frenetic, bravura style is a strange marriage of two types of theatre. Some indication of what it is can be seen in the fact that David Warner plays Morgan much as he interpreted Valentine Brose in Henry Livings' farce *Eh?* at the Aldwych, while Nan Munro plays the mother-in-law exactly as she performed her equivalent in the Royal Court revival of an earlier Aldwych farce, *A Cuckoo in the Nest*. (These two productions opened the same week in autumn 1964.) One's objection to *Morgan* is not the mixing of different conventions; this has after all become an accepted method nowadays (*Shoot the Pianist* is one of several highly successful examples). It is rather that in the confusion control of the movie has been lost. If everything in the film is fantastic why should anyone object to Morgan's conduct in particular; when the whole film is a fantasy then what is the reality to which his fantasies relate? In a sense *Morgan* is a paradigm of the present British movie scene. Equally, Morgan's youthfulness makes nonsense of the socio-political situation of which he is supposed to be a victim. In the play he was around ten at the time of the Spanish Civil War, while in the film he would scarcely be older than that when the Hungarian uprising took place. It is hardly surprising that the towering political figures (Marx, Trotsky *et al.*) which the film invokes are reduced metaphorically and actually to figures in a Pop painting.* Somewhere between people in their sixties (Morgan's mother, the die-hard Stalinist) and those in their early twenties (Morgan himself) there is a missing generation. It is this generation that is behind the cameras.

From a variety of critical stances then, *Darling*, *Alfie* and *Morgan* have been reduced to the same final point—a celebra-

* Morgan's car is actually got up to look like one of Peter Blake's Pop doors. The film itself is being advertised with a Pop art poster by Barry Fantoni, host of the TV teen show *A Whole Scene Going*. Ironically enough, when the stage version of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* eventually arrived in London, the poster for it was designed by Derek Boshier in the style of Roy Lichtenstein.

URSULA ANDRESS AND PETER SELLERS IN "CASINO ROYALE", RESOUNDINGLY ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE AS THE JAMES BOND JOKE TO END THEM ALL.



tion of the personal presence and ambience of Julie Christie, Michael Caine and David Warner. A celebration, not an examination or analysis. They have become objects, and as such the treatment of them is analogous to the way in which the Bond school consciously dwells on objects of ingenuity and concupiscence. In effect the pictures are advertisements, and what they are advertising is themselves and their central characters. Like *Nothing But the Best* and *What's New Pussycat?* they have become one with the non-world or half-world upon which they comment. Their implicit criticism has been vitiated by a process of stylistic and cultural homogenisation. Existing outside time, divorced from the past, denied the conditions in which experience can be obtained, their characters wander through a world in which it is an eternal twelve noon on a Saturday morning in the King's Road, Chelsea.

* * *

Time magazine was right in a way, about the films and about London, when it wrote of the curious mixture of the old and the new. For oddly enough many of the characters in the new cinema could happily co-exist with those of the pre-*Look Back in Anger* Fifties. For instance there is a striking resemblance between the policeman (or rather bobby) playing hopscotch in *Morgan* and the bishop dancing to the magic piano in *Salad Days*. In the wake of the theatre of non-communication has returned, under a new guise, a Peter Pantheon of people congenitally incapable of forming adult relationships or of articulating their situation. ("I simply involve my people in the consequences of their stupidity and then give them brains so they can suffer," wrote Stendhal; you are not halfway towards *Le Rouge et le Noir* by fulfilling only the first of these conditions.) Morgan Delt is almost a stock case of regression into infantilism and he is buttressed by a traditional English feyness masquerading as disaffiliation. The recrudescence of fascination with animal imagery probably stems from the "bears and squirrels" relationship of the hopelessly mismatched Jimmy and Alison Porter, whose final curtain dialogue has opened the gates of a veritable Whipsnade of whimsy. People call each other Pussycat; Joe Lampton envies the freedom of homing pigeons (and like them returns to his *Life at the Top*); Diana Scott in *Darling* carts around the goldfish with which she is identified; Alfie at the beginning and end is seen, and eventually comes to see himself, as a lovable mongrel dog; and as for *Morgan*, the whole picture is based on an endless association of animals from zebras to gorillas.

All these films blur and merge into each other like a room full of so many indistinguishable and derivative optical paintings. We are back to the overlapping that caused so much concern five years ago, when the Wardour Street shorthand for the central character of all working-class films was "the Albert Finney part", the setting of *A Kind of Loving* was switched to Lancashire for a little variety, and David Storey's Arthur Machin was re-christened Frank for the film of *This Sporting Life* to prevent him being confused with Alan Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton. We have moved from the cinema of anonymity to a cinema of pseudonymity.

In the early Sixties no British film was complete without a sequence set in a fun-fair. One might say that the fun-fair was the objective correlative of the movie-makers' attitude to the working class. It was ambivalent of course—a combination of disgust with what they took to be an impoverished mass culture (the overwhelming impression given by Lindsay Anderson's 1954 documentary *O Dreamland*) and an admiration for the uninhibited vulgarity and *joie de vivre* of the masses (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*). Its overall tone was democratic, brash, provincial, unselfconscious. What has replaced it as the significant locus of the new cinema is the private art gallery. Here the characteristics are quite the reverse—exclusive, cool, metropolitan, sophisticated. Just the place for Joe Lampton to be initiated into the London life or Diana Scott to visit on her social round, or for Morgan, with speeded up camera, to chase his rival about in. If this is the objective correlative of the new attitude, it is also ambiguous—on the one hand a mild repugnance for the fashionable world of modern art, on the other a scarcely disguised infatuation with this very world. In terms of High Camp, the



OSKAR WERNER, JULIE CHRISTIE IN TRUFFAUT'S "FAHRENHEIT 451".

most amusing and aware expression of this ambivalence is to be found in *Modesty Blaise*: the Op-art headquarters of the villainous Gabriel, and, especially, the mock torturing of Modesty with a piece of jagged iron sculpture.

Stylistically there is an interesting parallel between recent developments in the cinema and the visual arts. In a review of an exhibition of David Annesley's painted sheet-metal sculpture, Norbert Lynton remarked perceptively:

When avant-garde taste requires the image to be human and the surface to be expressionistic you have little option but to dive into the sorrows and burdens of human existence: when circumstances invite you to work in entirely abstract forms, to colour your sculpture and to keep it very clear-cut, the result is likely to be gay and decorative.

Now *mutatis mutandis* this is the phase that the British cinema has entered, and it is one closely related to a significant strain in the prevailing cultural climate of Britain. It is not a phase conducive to the creation of important works of art, or for that matter to entertainment that seeks to treat its subject in any kind of depth. It is for this reason that the style I have been describing works for Richard Lester in *A Hard Day's Night*, *The Knack* and *Help!*, but not for most of his contemporaries. Lester's aim is to celebrate the present, to capture it or that part of it which attracts him, which is principally and unashamedly the ad-man's, visitor-to-London's, "It's all happening" world of the youth revolution. He is temperamentally suited to it and has no larger claim upon the material than the instant, ephemeral and expendable use to which he puts it. For Lester the style *is* the subject, the medium is the message.

Lester too has been fortunate in having for two of his films the real Beatles, who have an incontestable right to the hairstyle which bears their name and the nexus of attitudes they represent. One might question the appropriateness of similar haircuts (or wigs) for Evelyn Waugh's Denis Barlow in *The Loved One*, for the painter Morgan Delt, or for the psychiatrist played by Peter Sellers in *What's New Pussycat?*. This no doubt is all part of the joke. Anything goes, but *anything*. If in

the light-headed mid-Sixties London has become the Cockaigne of the Western world, then the film industry's bejewelled crown of which the *Evening Standard* wrote is in reality the cap and bells of a jester's motley, worn over a Beatle wig.

* * *

One imagines that this is a passing phase—it can scarcely be other, although it could be argued that the coming of colour television might well provide it with an added lease of life. What it will give way to is anybody's guess. The need is still, as it always was, for personal films made in a style congenial to their makers and consistent with their subject matter. Why so few British directors seem capable of achieving this and utilising the freedom they presently enjoy, but may not have for long, is a question that puzzles me and to which I have found no satisfactory answer. "Is it the chromosomes," asks Morgan Delt plaintively, "or is it England?" One begins to wonder. That the most personal films on important themes made during the last seven years have been the work of Joseph Losey, whatever shortcomings some of them may have, is undeniable. That directors as varied as Polanski and Lumet, Kubrick and Truffaut, find this country a satisfactory place in which to work is not without significance. Maybe they don't feel the pressures experienced by our native film-makers. Perhaps, like Irish writers in the past, it was necessary for the two greatest directors England has produced to leave this country in order to realise themselves. I refer of course to Hitchcock and Chaplin.

In 1958 when Jack Clayton made the honourable, pioneering *Room at the Top*, it seemed as if a new range of techniques and subject matter had been made available to the British cinema. This has proved largely, yet not entirely, an illusion. At least, as after the opening of Pandora's Box, hope remains. If the rough-hewn *Room at the Top* makes us think of Pandora's Box, the films of the past couple of years bring to mind nothing so much as David Bailey's *Box of Pinups*. As for the renaissance: well it is true that the emperor *has* got new clothes, but should emperors shop exclusively in Carnaby Street?

AU HASARD BALTHAZAR



Two [pre \pm re] views

Richard Roud



MASCULIN FEMININ

NO CRITIC IN HIS RIGHT MIND would ever presume to review films as complex as Bresson's *Au Hasard Balthazar* or Godard's *Masculin Féminin* on the basis of single viewings. Which is all I have had. Charitably assuming I am no more foolhardy than the next man, what, then, is the point of the present article? As the mumbo-jumbo mathematics of the title seeks to indicate, these are more in the nature of previews, and only secondarily—and tentatively—reviews. Not so much a conclusion, more a prolegomena.

It is neither unseemly haste nor a desire for a scoop that prompted this piece. Rather, as both these films are fairly difficult, my idea was that some readers would welcome a kind of preparation, based, as I say, on only a single viewing, but also on a close study of the scripts.

More important, however, is the fact that both these films raise the question of the relation of plot to theme, and it seems to me that this is one of the most important problems facing any film-maker today. For many directors the old one-to-one relationship is no longer either valid or viable: e.g., the classical assumption that theme is a pure expression of plot and must arise logically and dramatically from it. This particular crisis was reached years ago in the novel; it has only caught up with the cinema in the last decade.

Readers will notice that there has been little attempt to describe or evoke what either of these films *looks* like. This is intentional; partly because the purpose of this article is to confine itself to the above-mentioned problem, and partly because neither film differs considerably from its director's predecessor in this respect. By and large, the Bresson looks like a Bresson film, and the Godard like—well, at least like *Une Femme Mariée*. Their originality is elsewhere.

★

TO TRACE THE GENESIS of a work of art is always tempting for the critic; the result, even if successful, is not always rewarding. In the case of *Au Hasard Balthazar*, it would appear that the idea first came to Bresson on reading (or re-reading) Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*; at least this is suggested by the epigraph which was to have appeared on the credits of the film:

... though my brain worked, the logical sequence of ideas was broken. I couldn't connect more than two or three ideas together ... I was insufferably sad ... I was all the while lost in wonder and uneasiness. What affected me most was that everything was *strange*. I was finally roused from this gloomy state one evening at Basel, and I was roused by the bray of an ass in the market place. I was immensely struck with the ass and for some reason, extraordinarily pleased with it, and suddenly everything seemed to clear up in my head.

"An ass? That's odd," observed Lizaveta Prokfyevna. "Yet there's nothing odd about it; one of us may even fall in love with an ass," she observed, looking wrathfully at the laughing girls. "It's happened in mythology."

In any case, as long ago as Autumn 1962 when Bresson came to London for the Festival presentation of *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, he told me that his next film was going to be about an ass. Controlling my astonishment, I murmured, "An ass?" Yes, the story of the ass throughout history. A lot of little episodes, the ass that carried Abraham, the one that Moses rode, the ass that bore the Virgin and Child into Egypt, the one on which Christ entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; Balaam's ass, the ass in the manger. Ah yes, I replied, the ass as Christian symbol of patience, humility, submissiveness. Not, answered Bresson, entirely. You know, of course, that the donkey is also an important sexual symbol, the most potent of all animals.

Well, I didn't know, and alas the conversation ended there. Now four years later the film has been made; but perhaps fortunately, Bresson's conception of it changed a great deal in the intervening years. *Au Hasard Balthazar* is the story of one particular ass; it is also the story of a schoolmaster and his daughter and a gang of leather-jacketed rockers who go in for smuggling on the side: in short a story very much unlike any Bresson has ever given us.

Although it is perhaps criminal to separate what Bresson has so organically joined together, I think I shall have to recount the two stories, especially since the technique of the film is not straight narrative: it proceeds by a series of brush-strokes, short elliptical scenes which give only the barest essence of any action, leaving the viewer to fill in what happened before and after each (very short) scene, as well as obliging him to establish the various relationships himself. I see that I have mixed my metaphors already, so one more won't matter: the film is a mosaic of perpetually interacting forms, narrative elements, and symbols.

The setting is a small French town near the Swiss border. Except for the prologue, which takes place about ten years ago, the time is the present. A schoolmaster, his wife, and their daughter, Marie, live next to a large farm, La Prairie, which is owned by a Monsieur C. from Paris. He visits the farm every summer with his children, and his son Jacques and Marie are childhood sweethearts.

During the adolescence of the children, Monsieur C. decides to confide the running of the farm to Marie's father, the schoolmaster. By the time Marie is sixteen, her father, having been given *carte blanche*, has succeeded in turning the run-down estate into two hundred *hectares* of first-class farmland. And then the idyll ceases. Jacques, who is still in love with Marie, is rebuffed by her. She has become sexually involved with Gérard, the vicious leader of a motorbike gang. At the same time the villagers, jealous of his success, begin to foment trouble between the schoolmaster and the owner of the land, Jacques' father. A series of anonymous letters suggest that he is embezzling the profits. The schoolmaster is (presumably) innocent, but too proud to try to vindicate himself. He wants justice, a trial.

Meanwhile, a policeman has been killed, or was it an accident? In any case he is dead, and suspicion falls on Gérard, whom the police already suspect of smuggling. But there is also another candidate: Arnold, a bearded alcoholic tramp. He denies all guilt and convinces the police chief that Gérard is innocent, too. As the police have no evidence, both are set free.

The long-awaited trial of Marie's father takes place at last, but, revolted by the accusations and the lies, he stalks out of the court, and is condemned by default. And then a kind of miracle occurs: Arnold, poor Arnold, is left a fortune by an unknown uncle. The whole town goes wild, and Arnold throws a party in the café, which soon degenerates into a brawl as Gérard and his gang tear the place apart. The next morning, Arnold goes off on a long journey—and mysteriously dies on the road.

Since her parents strongly disapprove of her liaison with Gérard, Marie leaves home. Disgusted with the cruelty of Gérard and his gang, she soon takes refuge in the house of a rich and miserly merchant, offering her body in exchange for food and shelter. As the merchant sets forth his materialistic, businesslike philosophy of life, Marie becomes more and more depressed; finally rejecting the money he has offered her, she prefers to go home again. Jacques reappears, ready to forgive all, to forget all, if she will marry him. But it is too late for his kind of love, and Marie is determined to give Gérard just one more chance. She is not to be spared the ultimate indignity; ambushed by Gérard and the gang, she is beaten, stripped, and locked in a deserted house. This time she leaves, never to return. Her father, a broken man, dies.

* * *

So much for the people; now for Balthazar. He is first heard over the credits, his braying cut into the music of a Schubert Piano Sonata. In the fourth shot he appears, new born: Jacques and his sister persuade their father to let them borrow him and Jacques brings him back in triumph to La Prairie. Jacques and Marie baptise him Balthazar, and he becomes their constant summer companion. Time passes; Balthazar returns to his owner; he is shod, and learns to draw a carriage. He grows up; he ploughs, he is beaten. Finally, taking refuge at La Prairie, he is bought by Marie's father, and he does his part in helping to cultivate the land.

Gérard and his gang torment Balthazar unmercifully, partly



"AU HASARD BALTHAZAR": ANNE WIAZEMSKY.

because Gérard suspects (?) that Marie loves the donkey more than she does him. Marie, more and more taken up with Gérard, forgets to feed Balthazar, locks herself up in her room. Her father, annoyed because the ass makes his family look old-fashioned, decides to sell him. He is bought by the baker, who has also hired Gérard to deliver bread round the countryside. Taking out all his anger and maliciousness on Balthazar, who accompanies him on his rounds, Gérard goes so far as to torture him, tying a burning paper on to his tail.

Balthazar is present when Gérard finally seduces Marie. Gérard chases her around and around Balthazar until finally she falls to the ground. (I cannot resist interjecting a comment: in this sequence Bresson's simplicity and restraint really pay off. In exactly three shots, the whole position and destiny of Marie are made clear. 1) Marie falls into the ditch and Gérard throws himself on her; we hear the noise of an approaching car; 2) a shot of the passing automobile; 3) Gérard stands up and takes Marie by the hand. The passing car was her chance to save herself if she had wanted to, but now we know that she no longer wants to—or is able to.)

A few weeks later, Balthazar grows mysteriously ill; the baker is ready to have him put away, but suddenly Arnold appears; he will take the ass, half-dead though he may be. His gentleness succeeds in curing Balthazar, and he uses him to give rides to tourists, lovers, Sunday painters, children. But then Arnold, tormented by a nightmare, suddenly and oddly turns against Balthazar and sells him to a circus. Here I must break in with another parenthesis: Balthazar's entrance into the circus is signalled with four extraordinary shots, one of a tiger, others of a polar bear, a gorilla, and an elephant. The exchange of glances between these four caged animals and Balthazar is fantastically exciting and profoundly moving, though why I cannot say.

In the circus he is taught to do a multiplication act (834 times 3) and he answers by stamping his foot the requisite number of times. He is a great success until the night that

Arnold appears in the audience; this breaks up the show. He returns with Arnold and he is there when the police chief announces Arnold's inheritance. And Arnold leaves town on his final journey on Balthazar's back.

After Arnold's death, Balthazar is sold at an auction to the miserly merchant, who uses him to turn a millstone. When Marie's father and mother come to take her back from the merchant, he offers them Balthazar who is now too old and weak to be much use to him. After Marie's father dies, Gérard and the others take Balthazar into the mountains on one of their smuggling expeditions. A customs officer opens fire; the boys get away, but Balthazar is wounded in the flank. The sun begins to rise on the mountain valley; the cowbells ring out, and Balthazar, wounded, makes his way down the slope. He comes to a halt and is surrounded by a flock of white sheep. They make a circle around the black standing figure, he sinks to his knees; two dogs arrive and the sheep slowly withdraw; Balthazar dies.

* * *

The two stories are intercut, intermingled even, and the most fascinating aspect of the film is the reason why Bresson has done it. The donkey is not just a device for telling the story, as in the famous French children's book *Mémoires d'un Ane*, by the Comtesse de Ségur. Nor is it a symbol, at least not in the usually accepted meaning of the word. Instead, Bresson seems to have invented a new form of discourse, which one might call by the barbarous name of unresolving dialectics.

In Bresson's conception, the donkey cannot be a simple one-to-one symbol, because the ass represents a plethora of significances. As Bresson indicated in our 1962 conversation, the donkey is both Christian symbol and sexual symbol. In fact, to anthropologists and psycho-analysts, the ass is "the pre-eminently phallic animal" (Ernest Jones). In ancient mythology the ass was dedicated to Priapus, and in the days of Apuleius, Robert Graves tells us, the ass typified lust, cruelty,



"MASCULIN FÉMININ": JEAN-PIERRE LEAUD.

and wickedness. Yet originally, he goes on, the ass had been so holy a beast that its ears, conventionalised as twin feathers sprouting from the end of a sceptre, became the mark of sovereignty in the hand of every Egyptian deity.

This paradox (contradiction? ambivalence? ambiguity?) is further reflected in the split between the conception of the ass as the stupidest of animals and another that he is the wisest. (Amusingly enough this contradiction persists even in the dictionaries of today: a French dictionary describes the *pons asinorum* as something so easy that anybody can accomplish it; a British dictionary maintains that the phrase refers to a difficult problem for beginners.)

A further problem arises in the very name of the film. Balthazar refers to one of the three wise men who journeyed to Bethlehem, of course: hence Christian symbolism. But on the other hand, Balthazar is also the French spelling of Belshazzar. I do not think this is a mere coincidence, given the fact that Daniel points out to Belshazzar that he has failed to hearken to the example of his father who, "when his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride, was deposed from his kingly throne and . . . was driven from the sons of men . . . his heart was made like the beasts and his dwelling was with the wild asses; they fed him with grass . . . till he knew that the most high God rules in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will." So, Balthazar as bringer of the Good News or Balthazar as the Lord's instrument to chasten the wicked? The first part of the title presents a few problems, too: *Au hasard* can mean at random (the Wind bloweth where it listeth) or it can mean promiscuously, or blindly. These may only be apparent contradictions in the Mind of God; on the other hand, I believe Bresson means us to keep in our heads these unresolved contradictions. They force us constantly to question the events of the story; they comment on them, they judge them, they recall them into question. In other words, a perpetually unresolved dialectic. Or an open-ended,

undirected, free, contradictory commentary to the story.

Or have I got it all wrong? Perhaps the story of Gérard and Marie is meant as a commentary on the story of the ass?

★

THE GENESIS OF Godard's *Masculin Féminin* should have been relatively easy to trace. As a project it began with the idea of a modern dress adaptation of two short stories of Guy de Maupassant—'Paul's Girl' and 'The Signal'. 'Paul's Girl' is one of Maupassant's cruellest and most daring stories; it concerns a young man who commits suicide when he discovers, catching her in the act, that his fiancée has Lesbian tendencies. 'The Signal' is more familiar; it is the one about the woman who notices from her window on the Rue Saint Lazare a prostitute in the window opposite who, with a special twist of her head and a look, entices men up to her room. Bored and curious, our lady tries it herself, and to her horror a gentleman accepts. As her husband is due to return at any moment, the quickest way of getting rid of her importunate visitor is to go through with it.

As *Masculin Féminin* is a Franco-Swedish co-production, rather than mix up Swedish and French actors (as Bresson did in *Au Hasard Balthazar*), Godard had the idea of making 'The Signal' into a film within the film: the characters of 'Paul's Girl' were at one point to go to the cinema where they would see a Swedish version of 'The Signal'.

Godard has always stressed that these would be *free* interpretations of Maupassant, but now that the film has come out, we see that there is no trace of Maupassant *at all* in the film, except, perhaps, for the fact that the hero's name is Paul and that his girl friend lives with two other girls. Although they are not meant to be Lesbians, Godard suggests that you might imagine that they are *very* good friends. There is a trace of 'The Signal' left in the three or four minutes that remain (!) of the film within the film, but mostly the Swedish section has

become a kind of parody of *The Silence* ("it's a film about a man and a woman in a foreign city").

What, then, is *Masculin Féminin* about? Godard has gone on record as saying that, after Marker's *Joli Mai* and Rouch's *Chronique d'un Été*, he wanted to do Paris in December, but a very particular December, that of 1965 and between the two elections. (Readers will remember that, as the first ballot for the Presidency was inconclusive, there was a second run-off between Mitterand and de Gaulle. Readers will also remember that de Gaulle finally won.) Godard adds that during the late autumn he was alone in Paris and found himself mixed up with a group of young people, who, although he is now a member of the older generation (*aetate* 35), accepted him as one of them. One of the crowd was a yé-yé singer, Chantal Goya (who plays the female lead in the film); another was a young trade unionist whose sexual problems led to several deviations from the party line.

All this is doubtless true, and certainly interesting. But *Masculin Féminin* is much more complex than these facts would suggest. Fortunately, it is a little easier to explain than the Bresson film, though, I think, no less interesting or important. It is just that we have been prepared by Godard's earlier films. Already from *Une Femme est une Femme* it became clear that Godard was not really interested in telling stories. The plot line of that film could have been—and was—summed up in two lines; the film itself was much more complex. Godard had already begun to use interspersed titles throughout the film and a kind of disembodied commentary which, even though it may have been spoken by one of the principal characters, could not be taken as simply a device to express his thoughts. Rather, it was a commentary on the film itself, on its mood and theme. *Vivre sa Vie* saw the idea of titles grow into a more developed principle, and in that film Godard applied his abstractionist techniques to a serious subject.

But the real breakthrough for Godard was certainly *Une Femme Mariée*, in which the theme was only tenuously linked to the plot itself, and in which the technique of narration was almost totally unconventional. *Pierrot le Fou* developed the antiphonal commentary, which, although spoken by the principal characters, sometimes preceded the action, and sometimes had little to do with it—but everything to do with what the film was really about.

Now, in *Masculin Féminin*, Godard has gone further still. The film is described on the credits as consisting of "fifteen precise actions" (*15 faits précis*), and it is indeed broken into 15 sections—I almost said tableaux, because many of them take place in a single locality and some of them are shot with an almost completely fixed camera. There is a simple story line: Paul from Marseilles has just finished his military service, and arrives in Paris looking for a job. Madeleine Zimmer, who works on a magazine but longs to be a big-time pop singer, gets him a job on her magazine. He falls in love with her, and succeeds in getting her to sleep with him. This she enjoys, but she has no desire to marry him. In spite of all their precautions, Madeleine becomes pregnant. The film ends with the death of Paul; suicide or accident? Madeleine is left investigating the possibilities of abortion.

* * *

So much for the plot. What the film is about is suggested by one of the interspersed titles: "This film could be called *The Children of Marx and of Coca Cola*." Paul is a Communist; he and his friend Robert spend long hours signing petitions, putting up posters, writing U.S. GO HOME on S.H.A.P.E. cars, discussing the characteristics of the Parisian worker, damning moderate socialists. But they are living in the period of both Vietnam and James Bond, and the girls they get involved with do not share their social preoccupations. (In a sense Paul's problem reminded me of that of Jacob in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*: Jacob's search to satisfy both his intellectual and physical demands also ends in death.)

The girls are definitely self-proclaimed members of the Pepsi generation. The only preoccupation they seem to share with the boys is the birth control problem, and the discussion of the

merits of the various devices forms a strong leit-motif to the film. (We must not forget that birth control is still illegal in France.) Otherwise their motto is: "Give us this day our TV and automobile, but deliver us from freedom." The girls are not unaware of this disparity, and one of Madeleine's friends tries to convince Paul that they are not for him; they will only make him unhappy. At bottom, he knows it too, but the means of controlling physical desire cannot be found in *Das Kapital*.

The relative unimportance of the story line is emphasised by the fact that its major events take place off screen: Paul's seduction of Madeleine, and his death. This, however, does not mean that the film is without action; there is a great deal of it in spite of all the conversations. But this leads me to the most interesting thing about the film: the way in which Godard has put it together. In a completely different way from Bresson, he, too, has used the mosaic method. This being the only way, I suppose, in which he could make the film as complete as possible a picture of a certain period in time, a certain generation. For example, the first sequence (Action One) takes place in a café. Paul and Madeleine begin to talk, and we learn that they have a mutual friend whom Madeleine will push into helping Paul get a job on the magazine. But during this scene, an argument breaks out between a man and a woman at an adjoining table. The man and child rush out; the woman runs after them and shoots him. To point out the absence of direct connection between this incident and the main plot, Paul's only reaction is to call out for the door to be shut. But this little scene is not gratuitous. It is there at the very beginning as a comment on what Paul's and Madeleine's life might be like if they were to get married.

A different kind of example can be found in the fourth section. Paul and his friend Robert are in the overhead métro, talking. Across the corridor of the train sit a blonde girl and two Negroes. Their conversation is practically lifted intact from Leroi Jones's play *The Dutchman*: but this is neither a homage to Jones nor a cute effect. Rather, it seems to me, it is a dramatic rendering of one of the problems that so concerns Paul and of which the girls are either ignorant or indifferent. In much the same way Vietnam makes its appearance throughout the film: first in a launderette when Robert explains to Paul who Bob Dylan is and why he is called a Vietnik; again in front of the American Hospital in Neuilly when a man sets himself on fire to protest against American policy in Vietnam. (The scene is introduced with characteristically cruel humour: a nondescript-looking man approaches Paul asking for a match. He runs off with the whole box and Paul follows after to get them back; it is then that he discovers why the man wanted the matches.)

* * *

By this defiantly unrealistic system of narrative, Godard manages to present us with all the problems facing his hero and facing boys of his generation. (The German problem is evoked by a conversation from a German tourist who cannot afford to pay a prostitute her usual fee because he is saving up to visit the Châteaux of the Loire. When she tells him her parents were killed by the Germans, he attempts to disengage himself by claiming that he was only a child at the time. But he is unsuccessful, because he cannot get out the words without stuttering: "I de-desol-desolidarise myself.") Other problems evoked include homosexuality, wicked projectionists who show 1:66 films in cinemascope ratio, Malraux (we hear a recording of one of his speeches over a demonstration of a toy guillotine), brassières, suicide, etc. But Godard being Godard (or perhaps me just being me) the unhappy love of Paul for Madeleine rises like a plaintive violin above the orchestral ensemble of problems, and his declarations of love are extremely moving: "Remember, you came out of the swimming pool; the same record was playing; remember, remember; December 5th, 1965 . . . The stars, I want to live with you, yes, tanned in a bikini, we'll play the slot machines together . . . Put on your lipstick, press yourself against me, we're taking off. Hello, control tower here. Boeing 707 calling Caravelle. Paul calling Madeleine."

IN THE PICTURE

Art Cinemas in Alliance

JUST BEFORE THE Cannes Festival, a much quieter and in some ways more dedicated gathering took place at the sleepy little resort of Hyères, along the coast towards Toulon. This was the tenth annual Conference of the International Confederation of Art Cinemas (C.I.C.A.E.), to which over 300 members in fourteen countries now belong.

What does C.I.C.A.E. do? It is primarily an association of enthusiastic art cinema owners who feel that international collaboration is one way of achieving a high standard of programmes. A regular information bulletin is edited in Paris and circulated to members, providing them with details of new films and of distribution and individual cinema results in other countries. Each year a C.I.C.A.E. Prize is awarded to the best new film by a young director. In 1965 it was Anthony Simmons' *Four in the Morning*, which as a direct result received distribution in France, Holland, Denmark, and elsewhere. The C.I.C.A.E. hopes to raise the status of this prize, so that future winners can anticipate distribution in every member country.

There was no British cinema owner at the Conference, a reflection of the fact that there is no internal organisation of art cinemas in this country, and that there is no tax rebate bestowed on those establishments who take the trouble and risk of showing quality features. In France, for example, there is such a system of tax relief, with the result that there are now well over a hundred genuine *salles d'art et d'essai* there, 42 of them in Paris alone. The German section has no fiscal allowance from the Federal Government, but it does have a powerful tradition of good programming, concentrated in the *Gilde Deutscher Filmkunsttheater*.

An important decision taken at Hyères was to permit specialised film distributors to join the C.I.C.A.E. under certain conditions, with the ultimate object of securing a closer alliance between the exhibitor and his supplier. The brightest ideal of an International Confederation of Art Cinemas must be to have the strength to commission a film-maker of repute—with critics and specialised audiences, if not with producers—and to guarantee a showing of his work in hundreds of member cinemas. There is still much ground to be covered by the C.I.C.A.E.: there is, for example, no American member, though hundreds of



SOPHIA LOREN, MICHAEL MEDWIN, MARLON BRANDO IN CHAPLIN'S
"A COUNTESS FROM HONGKONG".

art houses all over the United States could qualify for admission. Japan and Poland are still hovering on the fringes of the organisation.

But the principal lesson of this Conference to a British observer was that British art cinemas should ally now, and form the nucleus of a national association. The few first-class establishments that we possess should have a say in the progress of what could be a vital organisation for the promotion of good films.

PETER COWIE

Les Cahiers de Renoir

RUMOUR HAS IT THAT Renoir is to return to France to make a new film called *C'est la Révolution*. It is now four long years since *Le Caporal Epingle*, and the impatient may find some consolation in the fact that Renoir has just made his début as a novelist at the age of 71, with a book as rich and generous in personality as his films.

Published by Gallimard, *Les Cahiers du Capitaine Georges* is set, unexpectedly but most engagingly, during World War II in Wales, where old Richard Edmond Hartley lives in retirement with his corgis (Peter, Daisy and Daphne) and his housekeeper ("la vieille Margaret"), mourning the love he lost long ago by being too timid to speak out until it was too late. For a time he shares his home with a Free French officer, the melancholy Captain Georges, and the two men live happily wrapped in a mutual respect for each other's memories, until Captain Georges is parachuted into France on a secret mission, leaving a journal to tell the haunting story of Agnès, the prostitute whom he loved and lost through ten years of precariously perfect happiness. The ending has that marvellously casual rightness so characteristic of Renoir. Moved to an impulsive gesture (perhaps for the first time in his life) by the story he has just read, Hartley tells us he has decided to adopt a little girl, only to be warned by the doctor that he has chosen the daughter of a prostitute. "Je lui déclarai que je n'y voyais aucun inconvénient," he concludes.

The background, as one might expect, is a joyfully uninhibited account of the life and manners of a *fil de bonne famille* at the beginning of the century: Captain Georges' happy childhood with the servants below stairs; school and his discovery of love; his father's efforts to ensure that he loses his virginity worthily by introducing him to the most superior of cocottes; his training as a cavalry officer (obviously autobiographical material, and including a superb evocation of the exhilaration of a full cavalry charge); the *coup de foudre* of his meeting with Agnès during a wild celebration with his fellow officers. It is the almost tangible sense of past time regained which gives this book its haunting quality. One thinks of Ronsard's sonnet for Hélène, "Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle Assise auprès du feu..." Recollections in tranquillity, which still have a power to stab with pain and joy.

TOM MILNE

The Last Ride?

ON 9TH MARCH of this year *Variety* carried a full page announcement, couched in heavy legal phraseology, to the effect that Twentieth Century-Fox and Martin Rackin Productions had acquired the exclusive copyright in the "literary property" on which John Ford's classic Western *Stagecoach* was based. Martin Rackin Productions have, of course, just produced the

remake of the 1939 film, of which Fox are the distributors. But the point of the announcement appeared in the last paragraph, which declared, in heavy black type, that "any violation of the exclusive motion picture rights which the undersigned have in the said literary property, pursuant to said copyright renewal rights therein or otherwise, will be vigorously prosecuted."

Cinema history abounds with cases of disputed copyright. But there seems to be something of a depressing finality about this *Stagecoach* announcement. Does it mean that Ford's *Stagecoach* has been seen for the last time? The remake of *Caligari* hasn't resulted in the disappearance of the original; early Bergman is still around despite the rumour that Swedish television had bought the rights; and one can still see the first *Man Who Knew Too Much*. *Stagecoach* has been a popular film society choice and there are certainly copies in circulation here at the moment. It remains to be seen whether Fox and Rackin Productions will still allow the Ford version to be shown in Europe. Or is it from now on to be Ann-Margret and Bing Crosby in the authorised version?

DAVID WILSON

A Western for Cahiers

PER UN PUGNO DI DOLLARI as directed by Sergio Leone (alias Bob Robertson) is final proof that an identical script in the hands of two directors produces unrecognisably different films. Written into the Italian script there are the same situations, characters and scenes as in Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*. The Kurosawa a Japanese Western, the Leone an Italian Western; and the similarities between the two, as might have been expected, remain on paper.

After Leone's *Nel Segno di Roma* and *Il Colosseo di Rodi* few people would have predicted the enormous commercial success of *Per un Pugno di Dollari*. On the Italian circuits alone this Western has already made four million dollars, considerably more than *Goldfinger*. In Paris, one cinema reported a weekly attendance of 27,000, beating its nearest rival *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* by 11,000. The producers of *Yojimbo* have not taken to these figures kindly and are trying to make out a case for plagiarism in the hope of recuperating a few dollars. Not that Leone need worry. He has since completed a new film called—hardly surprisingly—*Per Qualche Dollari di Più*, and is off to Hollywood with a contract in his pocket.

Several factors explain Leone's overnight popularity. *Per un Pugno di Dollari* is a simple, thoroughly immoral and entertaining story. An Americano is hired by two rival gangs in a small town close to the Mexican border. When things don't look too good with one gang he switches sides, having previously made sure that the double-cross is going to be profitable. Played by Clint Eastwood, who has one of those poker faces that expresses everything and nothing at the same time, this smart, cynical character turns out to be unexpectedly sympathetic.

With an eye on the international market, the picture was shot in two languages and the names of the cast and technicians were suitably Americanised (so that, for example, the Italian actor Gian Maria Volonte goes by the name of John Wells). There is a refreshing amount of location shooting, and a complete absence of the sex and romance in soft focus that so often cloy the traditional Western. Dollars provide the substitute for sex and we are expected to accept the philosophy that "when a man has some

money in his pocket he begins to appreciate peace." There is much technicolor blood and Leone plays up some naïve sadistic effects, so much so that the French censor took exception to a particularly nasty close-up seen in the Italian version. The pace is compelling; the music makes use of a catchy theme tune that could be heard, last year, on every jukebox in Italy. A word of warning. The English dialogue is patchy and sometimes laughable; which is a pity because the Italian dialogue hits the right note all the time. Clint Eastwood's voice was so well dubbed in Italian that the English voice (his voice?) sounds false.

The cinephiles consider *Per un Pugno di Dollari* to be little more than good entertainment. *Cahiers du Cinéma* chooses to ignore Leone. But the least this film can claim is to have influenced the style of other Italian Westerns. The titles are sufficient indication. *Una Pistola per Ringo*, *Un Dollaro Buccato*, and *Le Pistole non Discutano* are the new box-office attractions for the Italian cinema of 1966.

ADRIAN MABEN

Work in Progress

France

CLAUDE CHABROL: Preparing *Histoires d'Elles*. The screenplay by Jean Curtelin is about two cousins (Catherine Deneuve and Stéphane Audran), one beautiful, one plain, and what happens when the beautiful girl falls under the domination of the plain one.

PHILIPPE DE BROCA: *Le Roi de Coeur*, poetic drama scripted by de Broca and set in 1918. An English soldier in a deserted French town finds the inmates of a lunatic asylum, left to their own devices, living according to their private image of happiness. With Alan Bates, Pierre Brasseur, Jean-Claude Brialy, Micheline Presle.

Great Britain

ROBERT ALDRICH: *The Dirty Dozen*. Twelve army men under prison sentences are offered reprieves if they undertake a dangerous mission behind enemy lines. With Ernest Borgnine, Charles Bronson, John Cassavetes, Kenneth Hyman for M-G-M.

BRYAN FORBES: *The Whisperers*, tragedy-comedy of an old woman (Edith Evans) and the public assistance officer (Eric Portman). Forbes' screenplay based on the novel by Robert Nicholson; North of England locations. Seven Pines for U.A.

SIDNEY J. FURIE: *The Naked Runner*, suspense drama starring Frank Sinatra, on location in Britain and the Continent. Screenplay by Stanley Mann from the novel by Francis Clifford. Sinatra Enterprises in association with Warner.

JOSEPH LOSEY: *Accident*. Screenplay by Harold Pinter from the Nicholas Mosley novel about a married don who has an affair with one of his students. With Dirk Bogarde, Stanley Baker and Delphine Seyrig. Oxford locations in colour. Springbok for Alliance International.

Italy

MARCO BELLOCCHIO: Follows *I Pugni in Tasca* with *La Cina e' Vicina*, another film about Italian family life, only this time in relation to the outside world. Produced by Bellocchio in association with Enzo Doria.

FRANCO ROSSI: *I Sotterranei del Vaticano*. Virna Lisi, Nino Manfredi and Bernard Blier in a screen adaptation of Gide's *Les Caves du Vatican*.

LUCHINO VISCONTI: *Lo Straniero*, from the novel by Camus; with Alain Delon and Algerian locations. Also *La Contessa Tarnowska*; with Romy Schneider and locations in Venice.



Meditation at 24 F.P.S.

Robert Vas

I AM WRITING in a basement cutting-room somewhere under the pavement of Wardour Street. It is past six o'clock. The Ciniola beside me is quiet; under the magnifying glass is a frame of a man frozen in mid-motion, eyes wide open and foot poised, until tomorrow morning; the loudspeaker which makes a kind of synthetic slang out of the Queen's English when the machine runs backwards is silent. The smell of film cement still lingers in the air, and the metal clappers of the joiner are wide open, awaiting new strips of film. Above the bins on tiny hooks hang shots of a documentary which will slowly, laboriously take shape during the next few days. A trench scene from World War I; a dogs' beauty-parlour; Malcolm Muggeridge; two men fighting; Clara Bow dancing the Charleston; 13 ft. of *Hunger in India* (libr. cat. no. 3425). Odd sounds, snippets of human voices, hang with them, chopped off in mid-note. Spare 'thes' and 'wells'—they always come in useful. Reminders for tomorrow written with red wax crayon on to the cutting-bench: "Moonlight—order flop-over," "Bring up bark 2 frames." Cans all over the place. One of them, a rusty, battered one with a faded legend on its side: "Journal Cure de Camp. dupe neg. reel 14." The last reel . . . Isn't it a blasphemy to imagine that that final, sublime, consummating shot of the Cross actually started with a clapperboard?

In this hell's kitchen of cellulose nitrate, gelatine and acetone, I am the master. Those three, five, ten-foot snippets of photographed reality, those visual sentences, are condemned to hang lifeless on the hooks until I give them a new lease of life: select, shape, trim; make points, rhythms; add meaning,

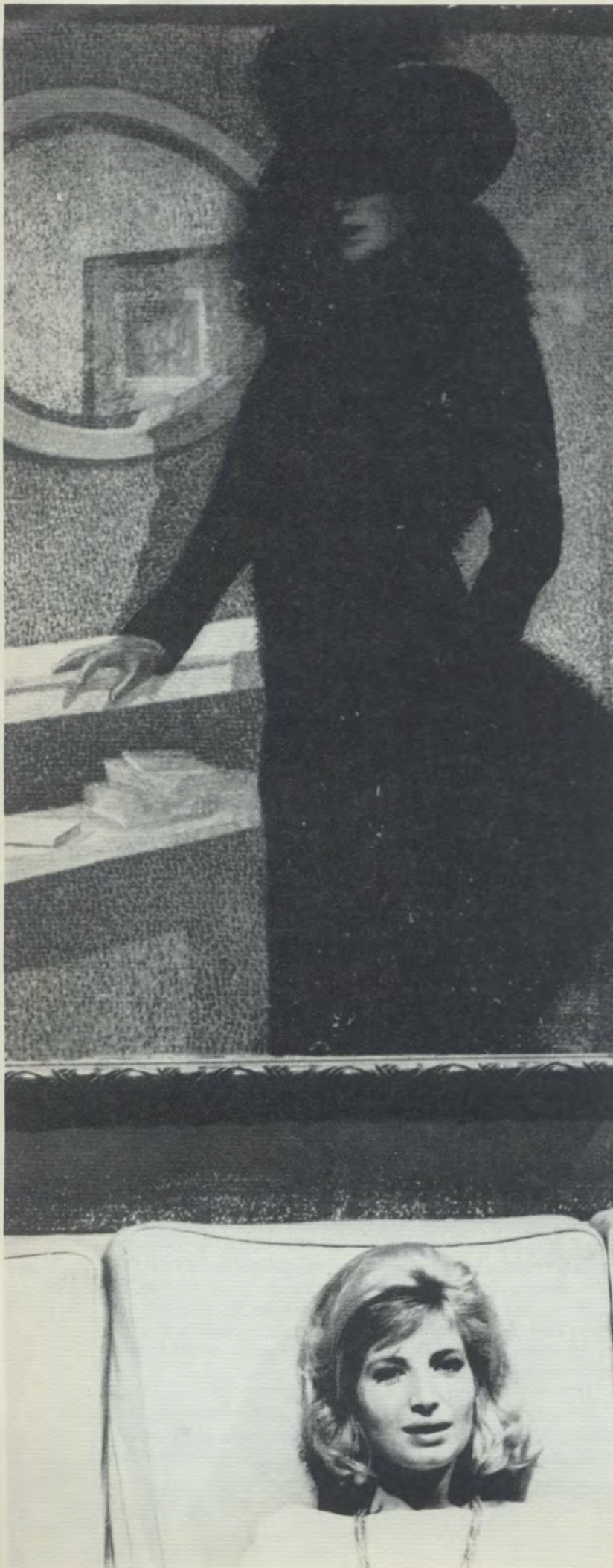
feeling. Now they are just Eisenstein's 'As' and 'Bs', waiting for the moment when the splicer joins them in wedlock to give birth to a 'C'. With those shots on the hooks I could make ardent propaganda, and as ardent counter-propaganda. I could create a climax or an anti-climax. Like Resnais, I could make you float in a vacuum of time and space, or like Eisenstein, I could make three different frames rattle like machine-gun fire, almost piercing into your flesh. With a well-chosen cut in a television film I could outdo even Hitchcock's showmanship: I could make half Britain feel the same shock of surprise in the same split second.

Whether I stick to the textbooks or upset all the rules, I am tied to a job that is limitless in its possibilities and yet wretchedly earth-bound at the same time. Here, where reality is broken down to sprocket-holes, to miserable little frames, each of them gloriously upholding one 24th of a second of the passing moment and hanging on the hooks—here in the cutting-room you can really feel how high-soaring and yet how broken-winged is this very technical art. Garbo looking at Boyer just a few frames longer turns her flirtation into an open offering of herself. Bits of what may become ethereal enigmas are joined with a pungent chemical—and they may not even stick the first time.

It is real magic and I am the master.

Or am I? Isn't this judgment basically false? A self-delusion? Do I have a right, after all, to shape in such a haphazard, arbitrary, egotistical way these strips of film which

ABOVE. PERPETUAL MOTION: THE BEATLES IN "A HARD DAY'S NIGHT."



could be interpreted as mosaic-pieces of an objective reality, a "this-is-how-it-actually-happened"? With the guillotine of my joiner do I not behead a kind of truth, something that could be the truth? "The frame," assumes Peter Brook in a recent SIGHT AND SOUND interview, "carries the meaning. A single frame is a full unit." Every single shot, whether from a newsreel or a fantasy, could be interpreted as an accurate visual sentence. Unlike a written sentence, it owes its life to the fact that what it shows has actually *happened*. And if I now come along to muddle up these sentences, rearranging them and adding my own question-marks and exclamation marks, do I lie or do I make art? Or both? In the phrase 'cinéma vérité', is the stress on the word *vérité*, in an absolute sense, or on *cinéma* with its own kind of *vérité*? Can the photographed image claim that it is an objective reality, or is it just reality seen through a lens (an objective)?

When Jennings uses that almost newsreel-like shot of the barrage balloon photographed through the columns of the National Gallery as part of his personal vision of Britain at war, surely he gives that shot its real, liberating meaning precisely by depriving it of its claim to be photographed reality, and so lending it the voice of poetry. To become a personal tool of expression in the hand of an artist—isn't this its only real chance? Look at the shots as they hang there so miserably on the hooks like dead chickens in a butcher's window: can we ever really confer the word 'truth' on them? They have been selected by a director, snatched by a cameraman, bathed in various fluids at the laboratory, and by now they are full of scratches. And when they reach their ultimate destination, the consummation of their existence, even then they'll be nothing but a projected image that cannot be grasped. Compared to them, the ice-cream you munch in the auditorium is strikingly, ostentatiously real.

A claim to an illusion of reality, or just a projected image? This question came up forcefully again and again during the last five years, posed by the differences between Leacock and Godard, Lindsay Anderson and Dick Lester, perhaps even between the Resnais of *Muriel* and the Resnais of *Marienbad*. And as editing is so much a natural part of their vision, it so happens that these were perhaps the most exciting years in the cutting-room since the Great Russian Revolution. The cinema became editing-conscious again, whether in the dramaturgy of quick cuts or endless takes, jump cuts for staccato or slow fusions for floating effect, frantic involvement or alienating distanciation. The editor's art, in fact, is 'in' again. His vocabulary, his means of expression, have become broader; and his achievement or failure, because he is so much at the centre of the creative process, may express something of what is generally good and bad in the modern cinema. The notes which follow at random, much as the strips of film hang here on their hooks, are not intended as a conscious survey. They may reveal only a partial truth—the part allotted to the editor—but may also perhaps happen to throw light on something else.

* * *

The art of Richard Leacock was helped into being by the intimacy, the receptivity of the small screen, and the versatility of a miraculously mobile, specially perfected filming apparatus. It is therefore understandable that he attributes his way of looking almost entirely to the camera, to *such* a camera. To him, the story of a shot ends when he releases the exposure knob with the feeling: "Here it is. Here is a whole piece of film. Such and such happened; we were in this place and here's what happened." Elsewhere in this interview in a recent issue of *Contrast* he adds: "You have to find something equivalent

to when you are screening rushes. Leave in the slating, anything you like." His attitude is contained within a single shot, to be accepted as it is, enjoyed for what it is. He gives himself some splendid raw material for a truly great film: the happenings of life captured in observant, inquisitive 1, 5, 10-minute takes that occasionally, unexpectedly (just one example: the prayer before the match in *Football*) make the whole material burst into life, strike an unsurpassable level of truth. In a way, such moments do not need the passages of imaginary rushes which lead up to them; and it is in the cutting-room, where this illusion of rushes has to be shaped into a viewable film, but in such a way that the illusion of an undisturbed reality is preserved, that doubt and uncertainty creep in.

The pitfalls are obvious. The moment one begins to do more than just select and assemble such material, and falls into the 'error' of shaping it into a piece of art, one runs the risk of losing the essence, the very purpose of the material. Take *The Chair*, for instance. Leacock preserves some marvellous moments: the long walk along the corridor and the checking of the electric chair: the defence counsellor's telephone conversation; the discussion between the condemned man and his editor about the novel he wrote in jail. They speak for themselves, they fill us with admiration for this new advance in the pursuit and recording of reality. But on the other hand, looking at the film as a whole, one can feel the hesitation in the cutting-room: this is no longer the raw material, nor is it the final, shaped product. The roles of the cutter, assembler and artistic conceiver constantly intermingle: what is missing here is an *editor*. He cannot cultivate, adapt, work over the raw material and add something of his own, because he is subordinate to it. His intrusion would kill such a film. Somewhere between the two extremes of raw material and final product lies the banana-skin on which this technically so progressive way of looking slips artistically.

Yet there are occasions when the editor will gladly withdraw and let the cameras roll undisturbed. The Leacockian idea of the illusion of viewing rushes found perfect expression in a television reportage made by the Maysles Brothers a few years ago about the Beatles' visit to New York. Making a virtue out of necessity in circumstances of practical difficulty, here was a raw, brilliant justification of a whole new way of looking and of a superior technical equipment. It consisted literally of about a dozen extremely long-held shots (with really just the synchronisation guides chopped off), and achieved a genuine quality of youthful exuberance by chasing the four boys, chasing the 'real thing' over hedge and ditch, press conference and jam session, relentlessly, attentively, acrobatically—until the natural vitality of the Beatles and that of the Maysles Brothers meant the same thing. In direct contradiction to Hitchcock's view of film-making, the dull bits weren't left out, but kept in proudly, gloriously. Selection, editing was done by the cameraman while walking and zooming: split second decisions of what to include, what to leave out. A process of creation going on simultaneously with the action in front of the camera—this parallel experience brings you just about as near as you can get in the attempt to lock the stuff of life into small tin cans. What could the editor add here? Quite apart from the fact that he wouldn't have enough variegated material to edit anyhow, it would be a pity, a misunderstanding to interrupt such a natural flow.

Chris Marker strikes perhaps the happiest middle way between candid recording of the real and its simultaneous personal treatment. His editing—perhaps the most telling way to approach his many-sided talent—ultimately creates a versatile, flexible, stylised intellectual framework which



"A WORLD OF FRAGMENTS . . ." EDDIE CONSTANTINE IN "ALPHAVILLE".

justifies and organises the many different elements in his films, and ensures that a general illusion of reality does not suffer because of a particular statement and vice versa.

In a way, the Beatles documentary and the best of the *cinéma vérité* films worked when they observed some contemporary phenomena which speak for themselves, producing their own dimensions and contradictions. Nowadays such contradictions proliferate around us. We don't live a life of slow dissolves but of straight, hard cuts. There are no fade-ins and fade-outs in our situations: without wasting time, bang, we are right in the middle of them. Those montage sequences of the Thirties and Forties where Busby Berkeley troupers go on the road while the names of towns come flinging towards you, train wheels rattle and hands run over the keyboard, headlines vie with each other, Paris, Moscow, 1930, 1935, 1940, in a cinematic attempt to simplify and intensify a process—all this is no longer really part of the vocabulary of director or editor.



THE LAST FIVE SHOTS, IN SEQUENCE, OF CHRIS MARKER'S "LA JETEE". STILL TAKEN FROM THE FRAME.

Modern life will itself intensify. To jump freely between past, present and future with straight cuts is not only true to life but is also a natural, accepted technique. We no longer need clumsy cutaways to bridge the gaps in the editing. Television invites very fast cutting: the eye can grasp the small screen more quickly and easily. The editor must be aware of these ways and means, recognise and evaluate new ones. Take for instance that fantastic shot of the murder of Lee Oswald at the Dallas police station. The gun is fired, Oswald collapses, flashbulbs sparkle, panic, confusion—and then, for a few seconds, a photographer's exposure meter appears at the bottom of the frame, almost blocking the view. According to the textbooks, these few frames should be cut as useless, having nothing to do with the subject; but it is precisely these frames, with the intrusion of that dumb and impertinent piece of hypermodern gadgetry, which lend the situation a frightful, abstract contemporaneity.

* * *

Resnais, Godard, Truffaut, Lester take it up at exactly the point where *cinéma vérité* suffers defeat, turning to their advantage the fact that to track down the real thing with a camera, shut it away in a can, and project it on to a screen ten, a hundred, a thousand times enlarged, is nothing but an illusion. If it is an illusion, why not make the most of it? And where better to call a film nothing but a film than the cutting-room with its bits of shots, half-sentences hanging on hooks, where the joiner fuses all kinds of contrasts and contradictions and art is measured by frames and sprocket-holes.

Eisenstein, Ruttman, *A propos de Nice*, *L'Age d'Or*, *Citizen Kane*—there is a continuous line of competition in the cinema between expressionism and realism; but it has never come so consciously into the foreground, never been so much a single unbroken chain, as in the past five or ten years. The complexity and tangibility of the world we live in (and the magnificence

of the technical equipment to record it) offers every encouragement to realism; and yet, at the same time, this same complexity cries out for a loosening of realism in the arts, a stylisation, a new vantage point for looking at things. *A Bout de Souffle*, even the way it is put on the screen, could have come straight out of the headlines. But besides being the 'real thing' it is precisely its stylisation, its staccato, haphazard, off-the-cuff nature (in many ways, the editing-consciousness of its conception) that adds the artistically decisive dimension.

For the first time since the Russians, through a whole chain of films, the directorial conception can be traced, understood, defined from the way the films are edited. Not only is editing a part of their vision; it often *is* the vision. "Movies are a world of fragments," said Godard in a recent television interview, "so why pretend smoothness?" He and his contemporaries invented celluloid for the second time. One may be tied down by the illusion of 'the real thing', but to bits of film *anything* can happen.



So the editor, whose role used to be to make sure that the most suitable shot was kept on the screen for the most suitable length of time (obligingly putting in a close-up of Ruby Keeler's legs when she was dancing in long-shot so that the audience could feel that they were being guided not to miss anything), now finds himself paradoxically in the position of taking bits out to obscure clarity. He who was once kept carefully in the background like a piece of incidental music is asked to step forward and make the viewer conscious of his workshop, of the fact that what appears on the screen is only bits of film cemented together. He whose gospel truth was that a good cut is one that is smooth and passes unnoticed, will deliberately create jolts, jerks, caesuras, to establish a world of vignettes, of film-shots on hooks with no self-discipline. He who created order will create (in a way) disorder. He will keep the three classic Unities far from the cutting-room; he will create a world where there are no handy establishing shots to tell us where we are; a world where distant Long Shots are followed by Big Close-Ups; where people go out of shot left and—yes—enter the next shot from left. In such a world, anything can happen . . .

It is interesting to watch the way Dick Lester, in his Beatles films, achieves through editing the same kind of exuberant youthfulness that the Maysles Brothers captured in their camera reportage. The sense of 'being there', created by their endless shots, is achieved by Lester in a terrific, stylised staccato. The jiving girl observed by the Maysles in a single, extremely long-held shot twitches herself endlessly within the frame. In a Lester film the frame would twitch with her in hundreds of quick cuts. The Maysles enjoy handling a camera: Lester is crazy about his scissors. Editing, once a weapon in the hand of a propagandist, is here a game, a juggler's act (and Lester seldom drops a ball). The Master's classic 'A' and 'B' ostentatiously resist becoming a 'C'—but then, it's so

much more fun to see a crazy 'X', 'Y' or 'Z' emerge instead; and anyway, 'A' and 'B' might not be 'A' and 'B' either, existing less for their own sake than for the split-second jerk when one shot changes to another.

* * *

What is a cut? A harmonic contrast between shots. One gives way to another; obviously with a purpose, so that we feel we are being guided; offering an immediate sensation as well as being a link in the dialectic chain of the film. (Thinking in abstract terms one sometimes, rather uselessly, wonders whether a shot following another on the screen could in fact be placed *beside* or *beneath* the first: does it follow horizontally or vertically?) A cut is more than what lies between a full stop and the capital letter starting the next sentence; it is more than the passive white space on the paper. For it is a definite deed, an action that may have an effect both on the sentence just concluded and on the one about to begin. It could almost be

comes not only from the strange, half-real, half-unreal quality within the shots, but from his cutting, which amplifies this quality by stressing that it's all just a movie anyway. One looks forward to 'the new Godard' because one never knows what the next shot on the screen will be—or will *not* be, for that matter. His frequent jump cuts release the bounds of time, place, action; he will do his best to deprive his world of its logic. In the self-imposed, projected universe of a movie, his fragmentary quality is fully justified. It reminds you that you should never feel safe, that you aren't being presented with something 'complete and unabridged', but being challenged to search for the connections and missing bits. In a strange way, every cut of Godard's is an extension of a certain meditative pessimism. Eisenstein's cuts are exclamation marks; here they become question marks. One shot questions the next, and the clues are scattered on the cutting-room floor.

As so often happens, these innovations have become fashionable. This is perhaps not the right occasion to mention



called a committed act: one shot is finished, there is a reason for a change, and with the cut the change comes. It constantly redirects the attention, keeps it alert. And Antonioni, for instance, whose artistic universe relies so much on a (participant) alienation, had to invent his own cutting style, just as a good dramatist creates the dramaturgy that suits him best: not cutting too much; depriving the cut of its committed charge and making it seemingly casual, unimportant; inventing a different kind of smoothness, an inner continuity of emotion and intellect.

The effect of a cut might often be compared to the immediate impact of a close-up. But Antonioni's world is one of long-shots, like the street scenes in the last reel of *L'Eclisse*, thrown on the screen, isolated, with an implacability which neither offers nor owes an explanation. His way of looking seeks to redirect our attention from what actually happens on the surface to the inner, psychological happenings. So, instead of the customary 'what you should see,' we are given what we *shouldn't* see. Claudia in *L'Avventura* walks along the hotel corridor (to find a minute later her lover deceiving her) in an extremely long-held shot. In a straightforward story-telling film, that shot would be dead after 10 seconds: it has told its story, let's have the next one. But here those first seconds are unimportant, and the new dimension of the shot begins to emerge at the point when it is dead from a story-telling point of view. After 20 seconds and still on the screen, it acquires a certain mystery: tension mounts, for we are forced to search for a reason why it is not cut. After 30 seconds and Claudia still coming, it begins to acquire depth, music, rhythm, psychology, or whatever one calls that inexplicable plus, and there are still a few seconds to go . . . In a similar way, one of the most exciting bits of acting in recent years was the *not* cutting of Jeanne Moreau's endless, mysterious close-up in Peter Brook's *Moderato Cantabile*.

In a Godard film, on the other hand, that inexplicable plus



how infuriating Godard himself can be—at least to the present writer—with his self-centredness and intellectual superiority; but when it comes to taking *out* frames even, how different it is when Godard does it than, say, Tony Richardson. From being an inseparable part of a vision, jump-cutting becomes a desperate substitute for a lack of vision. The climactic cross-country race in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, with its flustered, haphazard over-editing, betrayed the fact that the hero and his story were never really understood by the director, and were portrayed without consistency and perhaps without genuine concern either. The earlier jump-cuts in the film, as in many recent films by other directors, are simply gestures seeking to please, to be 'with it'. To show the shot in full might perhaps lead to a statement for which one could be held responsible; but with a jump-cut it becomes 'stylised', and could mean anything.

Perhaps this series of reflections on "editing in the Sixties" should have begun with Alain Resnais: it was he who started it all. "A man far out ahead," wrote Penelope Gilliatt on *Muriel*, "in a country where no one has been before; you can hear the trees falling as he clears the path." This path falls somewhere in between. Resnais' strips of film neither pursue realism, nor stress the fact that they are only strips of film. Instead of pictures projected with an arc-light on to a silver screen, they exist on the imaginary screen of an intellect. His shots help the progress of this intellect in its freewheeling journey between past and future, dream and reality, fact and imagination. He may carry literary baggage, but editing is his ticket to the journey.

* * *

A starting point as well as a culmination, Resnais' work offers a whole list of new entries in an editor's vocabulary. He begins *Hiroshima, mon Amour* with the shot of the embrace of glittering arms. And once this dreamlike, stylised level is established, he is able in the famous first reel to make some of the most direct, hard-hitting cuts in modern cinema. They carry a straight statement, and are stylised at the same time, without these elements interfering with each other. You feel that these shots have always belonged together, like two lines in a great poem. A little later comes the quick, puzzling cut to the pavilion: it appears, mystifies, and is already off the screen. It tells you in four seconds that you are watching a new kind of cinema which expects you to look at it as if you were reading a book; and as you can't turn back the pages, perhaps look at it many times. It asks you to be alert with your eyes. But then, later on, when we are given the explanation of the pavilion shot, Resnais almost rehabilitates it: the same shot now confirms that even a solitary cubist fragment belongs ultimately within some kind of context which will clarify, affirm its meaning.

Later still, the cross-cutting between Hiroshima and Nevers, their many variations in sound and image, become links between past and present over distances both physical and emotional. Once the context has been established for separate shots that carry their own inner charge, then the simplest succession of two shots will express a fine, shaded universe. On the other hand, in the sequence after her first day with the Japanese architect, when Riva returns to the hotel full of doubt and emotional insecurity, walks along the corridor, and leaves the frame on the left while the camera photographs the empty corridor until she reappears a few seconds later to walk back again—here the drama happens in a single shot, and in the empty, 'dead' part of the shot at that, evoked by the deserted corridor's suggestion that she will have to make her way back along it.

Marienbad emphasised the musical nature of editing. The shots are not sentences, but musical phrases which blend into a visual harmony. This is a film in which every cut, where possible, is made in a baroque style, and one cannot remember how long the shots are, for one floats in a timeless vacuum. As with a piece of music, *Marienbad* needs no explanation. *Muriel*, on the other hand, springs to one's mind as something dense and concentrated, almost like a film by Bresson, where the editor works, within the complicated framework of the story, with the spare muscularity of a precise literary text. The opening sequence, with the succession of quick psychological observations by Hélène's visitor, matches the quality of quickly 'cut' short sentences in a novel. Here a jump-cut is not an arbitrary game but a concentrated discipline. "Resnais," writes Richard Roud, "has cut out the vowels, the linking scenes. No time is wasted. Every shot is essential and also has its place in a film which is formally as organised as a fugue." From cubism to the discipline of classical music, from philosophical depth to psychological impressionism, the editor has all the elements of a *Gesamtkunst* hanging there on the hooks. Will he, will cinema finally be able to achieve the impossible?

* * *

A few weeks ago I was watching a television play with a friend, an experienced TV producer. In the climactic scene, the hero visits his rival with the obvious intention of shooting him. He enters the room in a long-shot and stops by the door.

The other doesn't see him yet. Tension. He has an air of authority, superiority, that now needs to be intensified. A pause, a static moment of expectancy. The content of the scene, the rhythm of the action, demands a jump nearer to him, into a closer shot. To underline his presence. Give it a plus. Indicate a determination to act. Just a bit of plus from the editing department. "Cut," I said. I wanted it; I swear the hero wanted it too. But my friend the producer shook his head. "No," he said, "wait until he moves. They can cut on movement only." And truly, the instant the hero whipped out his revolver, there was a cut to a closer shot on the sudden movement (so that the change wouldn't show). The cut was hidden all right, but the plus, the push that a deliberate cut would have given, was gone.

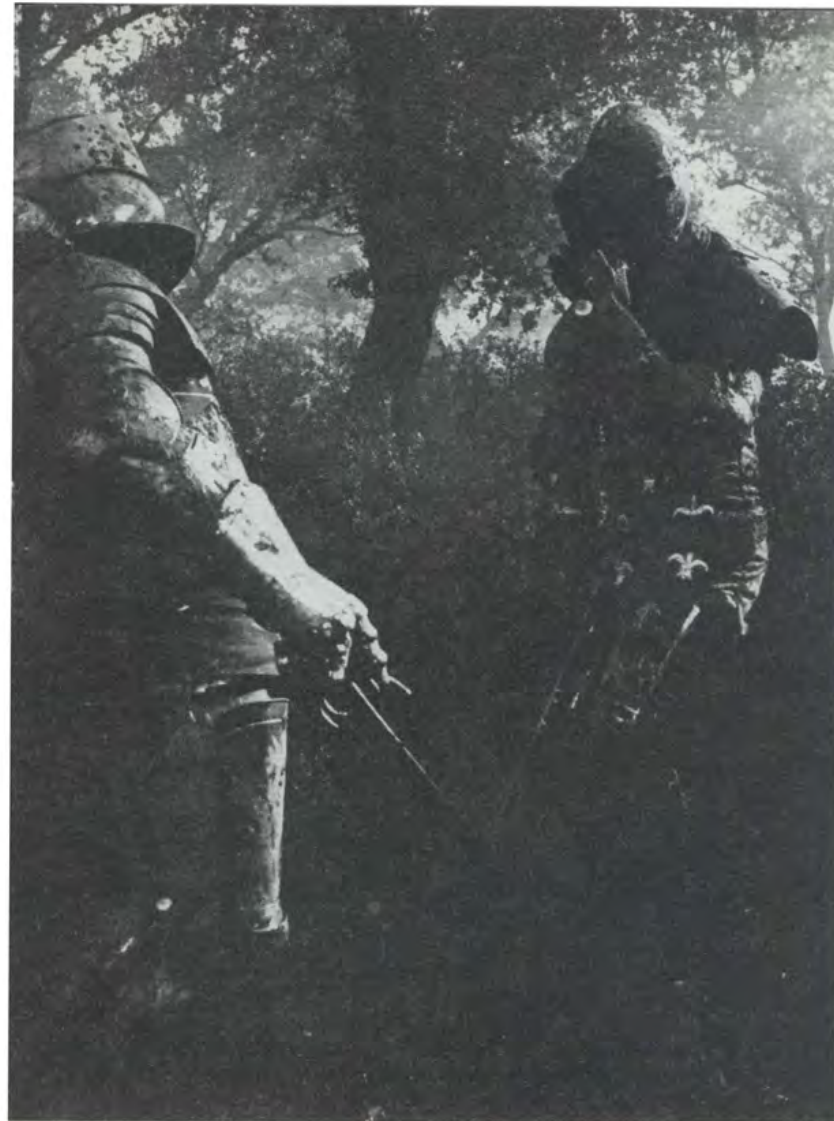
The show went on smoothly, as prescribed by the commercial textbooks. Family audiences with a cuppa in their lap want fluent craftsmanship and no monkey business. But there was a time when every cut, even in family fare, carried a certain dignity, very often even a deliberate attitude. A sudden, awkward cut to a close-up of Ollie's face expressing disapproval of Stan's misbehaviour contained a purpose as well as a fulfilment. Directors wanted us to recognise that they were showing what is most important, asked us to be aware of this and to watch for every new cut bringing another shot. Today we are masters of concealment.

Especially on a screen as wide as an open field. When Professor Higgins walks home gaily along the Bloomsbury street in *My Fair Lady*, we cut from a Very Long Shot to an almost Very Long Shot, from the same side but from a slightly lower angle. There isn't much opportunity for a more direct cut to, say, a close-up. The wider-than-wide screen would amplify this jump to an extreme degree, send you in the wrong direction, destroy the mood. Widescreen makes editing lazy. It limits the editor's vocabulary, or at least necessitates a different kind of vocabulary. And in one way or another television too (though it gets away with some very sophisticated cutting) has more than one form of laziness. The overabundance of synchronous sound in documentaries, for instance, may help to achieve a more complete illusion of reality, but it also spoils the viewer; spoon-feeds him in a much too leisurely way; makes the editor's comment with pictures almost unnecessary; precludes the kind of poetry Jennings achieved. Jennings had not much lip-synch—but the whole of Britain spoke through his images.

* * *

The alternative to this smooth commercial craftsmanship is the intellectual editing-consciousness of art films. The gap between the two is unnaturally wide, and editing itself could prove that it could be bridged. The ways and means of the editor's craft have become everyday language. Small children know the rules of continuity long before they master the ABC. If you use a mix instead of a straight cut between two shots linking an interval of twenty years, you are rightly considered a bore. The audience knows the tricks of the trade, knows that the magician will have to cheat in order to make the show a success; yet not one of them doubts that the conjured rabbit is a genuine one.

They had a good schooling: films taught them to look at films. And now, when this general knowledge could be used as a basis for moving on towards a more mature film language, the cinema leaves it to the art houses. But this is a natural, generally accepted language, and the average viewer is ready for it. The poetry of Jennings. The visual excitement of *Night Mail*. The musical notation of *Marienbad*. The cut from the Olympic torch to a frightening ball of fire which a few seconds later turns out to be the gloriously rising sun in Ichikawa's *Tokyo Olympiad*. Even the impudence of someone in a shot holding a cigarette in his left hand, cut in the next to him holding it in his right (and the editor getting away with it). All this and so much more is potentially included in those stray, pathetic little celluloid strips hanging there on the hooks waiting for tomorrow morning, when they will once again begin to attract and repulse each other until, after many weeks of slow and laborious work in the basement, perhaps something new and worthwhile will emerge.



"CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT".

Festivals 66

Cannes

SCHIZOPHRENIA, the endemic disease of festivals, seems to be tightening its hold on Cannes. At the Palais this year there's a distinct Royal Academy atmosphere: almost an establishment festival, with plenty of portly aldermanic portraits, film-style; Sophia Loren reigning over the Jury; and Losey's *Modesty Blaise* nervously asserting itself as the pop picture of the show. In the town, the salesmen of the Marché du Film are quite unequivocal. "Un film sexy, un film choc . . . the film every distributor dreams of . . ." "After *Candy*, *Lollipop* . . . an incestuous love affair." Of course the festival is not itself running these shows. But they coincide; they emphasise the mental confusion, evident enough in our own specialised cinemas, between art house and peepshow. Is this what the Festival wants? Or is Cannes in danger of becoming a suitable case for treatment?

As so often, the film everyone most wanted to see was the film the Festival had rejected. Resnais' *La Guerre est Finie* couldn't be shown officially for fear of offending the Spanish Government; and even the shot of the big notice-board at Orly (see page 76 of the Spring SIGHT AND SOUND) has been cut at the request of the airport. All of which might make the film sound inflammatory; and be entirely misleading. *La Guerre est Finie* is quiet, reflective, deeply intelligent: a study not of the

revolutionary temperament but of the time when evasion has become a habit and a reflex, and the ideals are buried somewhere back in the past. Yves Montand plays the central character: travelling from Spain to Paris on a borrowed passport, meeting with hard-core exiles who talk of old-fashioned coups and with tough young activists who regard him as an ageing romantic, pursuing his own identity as much as his political errand. Memories of the past hang over Jorge Semprun's script, but not this time over Resnais' style. Rather he is concerned with chance and fatality—the other side of the Resnais coin, the Hitchcock side, which sees a story not in terms of what happened, but of what might happen. In Paris Montand will meet a stranger, the daughter of the man whose identity he has borrowed. What is she like? A series of flash shots, different girls descending a staircase, flickers through his mind.

These recurring mental images, most of them perfectly straightforward and plain to follow, merge into a film whose lucidity and stylistic fluency are never in question. Resnais' *La Peau Douce*, as someone suggested. The towering blocks of flats reappear, as strategically placed as in *Muriel*; there's the same glancing humour; and the same finesse in directing a scene (the one, for instance, in which Montand forgets his borrowed telephone number while being questioned at the frontier) so that the key moment passes in a flicker of the eyes. But two long central love scenes look strained in their lyricism (chanted musical emphasis; *Femme Mariée* shots of disconnected limbs). During the second half of the film, I find myself wondering whether there's enough in the script to flex Resnais' imagination: it is annotation and detail, rather than the central line through the characters, which holds the attention. This, though, is no film to write about after one suffocatingly crowded late-night screening. Happily, its London opening is already scheduled for the autumn.

It would have been interesting to know what Orson Welles thought of the Resnais film: across the years, there is a kind of alliance between the identity-puzzle of *Kane* and the mental perspectives of Resnais. But Welles himself, larger and more jovial than ever, has acquired the elder statesman's touch. If his *Chimes at Midnight* seemed disappointing in its orthodoxy, this was partly because with Welles one cannot shake off the expectation of surprise. Presumably he made it chiefly because he wanted to preserve his own stage Falstaff on film; because he sees Falstaff, as he has said, as a survivor from a more innocent England already dying when Shakespeare wrote. Yet the odd thing is how diminished this Falstaff appears, and how tedious Welles makes all that scampering around Gadshill in Father Christmas robes and the romping with Poinas and Doll Tearsheet (Moreau). Even the recruiting scene, with that sudden shivering intimation of mortality cutting through the doddering village humours, goes in this version for nothing.

For all the consummate agility of camera movement, and the set-piece battle scene, opening with the knights being lumberingly lowered on to their horses by pulleys, and ending in a muddy heap of armoured limbs, much of *Chimes at Midnight* is unexciting to watch. Beautiful moments—Falstaff standing clumsy and lonely and absurd during the battle; the last shot of the coffin being dragged out of the inn yard while Mistress Quickly stands at her gateway. But the best performances in the film are those of John Gielgud (particularly the final speech) and Keith Baxter as the two Henries; and the emergence of Hal as king, the inevitability of the break with the past, becomes the central theme. One remembers that one of the continuing lines of interest for Welles has always been the machinery of power. Falstaff, inviting rejection by interrupting Henry at an extraordinarily maladroit moment during the coronation, is in danger of appearing an expendable old buffoon; whether Welles intended it or not, the real centre of the film has shifted.

If there seems to be some temperamental split in the Welles film, that is the last fault one could find with Pasolini's *Uccellacci e Uccellini*. What holds this exasperating, playful, intellectual, faux-naïf, and overwhelmingly Italian fable together is simply Pasolini's personal vision of the unresolved dialogue between Marxism and the Catholic Church. A



"UCCELLACCI E UCCELLINI".

vagrant gentleman (Toto) and his son wander down a long road—the road of life, Pasolini isn't afraid simply to tell us. They encounter a rational, talkative crow, who beguiles their journey with a fable, in which they reappear as two friars entrusted by St. Francis with the task of communicating with the birds. And when Toto, after years spent patiently on his knees, while the ivy entwines itself around him, finally learns to talk first to the birds of prey (*uccellacci*), then to the sparrows (*uccellini*), the hawks promptly celebrate their introduction to the Christian message by gobbling up the sparrows. The end of the film, after other encounters, including an almost Felliniesque celebration of the Life Force, finds the wayfarers consuming the crow, before setting off like Chaplin's tramp into the sunset.

There are moments of sweetness (Toto's idiot communication with the sparrows), moments of severity (an evocation of Togliatti's funeral), sly jokes, poetic *rencontres*, explanatory messages. The locations are that Italian wasteland, neither town nor country but an eternal *periferia*, in keeping with the unending journey through a dialectic. A constitutional resistance to the fable form—whether La Fontaine or Pasolini—keeps me at some mental distance from the film. I mistrust the blinding simplifications, with the subtleties slipped in, as it were, under plain cover. But this journey of the left-wing crow and the feckless wayfarers is a film of complete individuality, apparent even from the sung credits, in which Pasolini gaily admits that he is risking his reputation.

* * *

Pasolini, Welles, Resnais, Losey: these are the made reputations. And although all four directors may seem to be putting them at risk with films which break in various ways with the past, in any real sense these reputations are plainly invulnerable. A disappointment at Cannes this year was the orthodoxy of films from younger directors with much more to gain and less to lose. Ado Kyrrou, Greek by birth, French by adoption, critic and enthusiast for the *insolite*, went to Greece to make *Bloko*—a war film of stunning mediocrity. Luc Moullet, *Cahiers*-school critic, has directed his first feature in *Brigitte et Brigitte*: revue-sketch comedy, flimsy but optimistic, about two girl students in Paris, taking exams, going on camping holidays, and so on. The funniest sequence, typically, is the in-joke one, where they conduct a quiz which reveals everyone's favourite American directors to be "Hitchcock, Orson Welles, et Jerry Lewis." Yet another ex-critic's film—Jörn Donner's third, *Adventure Starts Here*—finds the Antonioni influence still working overtime. Harriet Andersson moons and ambles around Helsinki, trying to make up her mind whether to marry a hypochondriac Finnish architect or return to the even limper Frenchman waiting at her hotel. Donner is much concerned with language differences (Harriet's constant exasperation at being unable to speak Finnish gets lost in the subtitles) and with the sense of alienation in a foreign town. But beneath the worried intellectualism

of the style and the alluring views of Helsinki, there is an inertia and glumness which prevents his film from developing much momentum.

The attraction of Claude Lelouch's *Un Homme et une Femme* was precisely that it did move: that a director of, one might suspect, less than first-class talent, had assimilated handily and effectively an idiom for a modern romance. She (Anouk Aimée) works in a film studio; he (Jean-Louis Trintignant) is a racing driver. Widow and widower, they meet on Sundays taking their young children out from school at Deauville. The place and the occupations are indicative: these are the getaway people of the advertisements, and when they are zigzagging a car along a beach, or playing a little too cutely with their children, there's just about the level of involvement one feels in looking at some really attractive commercial. Colour sequences (alternated with scenes in tinted black and white) are Sunday Supplement special; influences (Lester, Demy, Minnelli) proclaim themselves. And then criticism finds itself disarmed. The people are so persuasively likeable, and so obviously liked by the director; the colour is marvellous (Lelouch worked on the photography); there's a taking expertise in the film studio and racing car scenes, a real command of pace. There is, simply, charm. Every time the couple get into a car the rain pelts down; but one forgives Lelouch his fixation with windscreen-wipers for those three or four shots in which he catches the matchless light that Boudin found at Deauville.

The easiness of the Lelouch film showed up, by brutal contrast, the lethal strain underlying Tony Richardson's *Mademoiselle*, made in the Corrèze last year with Jeanne Moreau as the pyromaniac schoolmistress set on the road to arson by unrequited love for an itinerant Italian woodcutter. Script by Genet, with near-parody echoes of D. H. Lawrence in the couple's marathon love-making all round the countryside. With its twined snakes, dead rabbits, creeping pace, art camerawork, and misguided devotion to the portentous pause, this is a really rare case of the art film run amok.

A noisy audience, which had resented Princess Margaret's late arrival at *Modesty Blaise*, and reacted so derisively to two shots of *Mademoiselle* (arty clouds and moon) that they were hastily cut between one screening and the next, got in some more cries of outrage at *Young Torless*. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff, one-time assistant to Malle and Resnais, this adaptation of Robert Musil's novel opens quite promisingly, with mistily grey landscapes, a railway station farewell to mother, a return to the dour setting of the military academy. But liberal intentions, if that is what they are, seem poorly served by the object lesson that it takes two to make a concentration camp, and that the victim invites the torture by accepting it. As a tract on the roots of Nazism, this one boomerangs like others before it. In a slightly similar style, the academic adaptation of a 'classic' novel, I much preferred Henning Carlsen's version of Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*. This is

a heavy, concentrated film, with a real tour de force in the performance of Per Oscarsson, the young writer literally starving in Christiania, but retaining a quirkish white-collar pride. Given someone else's change by accident in a shop, and so able to buy his first meal of the week, he returns next morning to upbraid the shop assistant for chattering and neglecting his job; encountering policemen on the beat, he asks them the time with an air of ineffable patronage.

Nothing this year from Japan; *Alfie* and *Morgan* representing Britain; a Russian film (*Hullo, It's Me*) whose heroine managed to age only from about eight to twenty between (roughly) 1942 and 1965; *The Hopeless Ones*, that fine puzzle-mechanism of a prison camp about which Robert Vas writes elsewhere, standing out head and shoulders above anything else from East Europe. Not much retrospection, since the Festival's intention of showing a collection of famous unfinished films (Clair, Carné, Clouzot, etc.) foundered on the difficulty of laying hands on the material in a screenable form.

For retrospection, though, one only had to walk to the Hotel Martinez, where the Cinémathèque Française had mounted an exhibition to celebrate the cinema's first seventy years. Stills and posters; scripts, sketches, costumes; mechanical gadgets. In its cunning air of disarray, the exhibition enchantingly reflected the image one has of the Cinémathèque's own personality, as a kind of magpie nest with Henri Langlois roosting at its centre. Crumpled, grimy and forlorn, the old costumes—Stroheim's *Wedding March* uniform, Cherkassov's huge boots for *Ivan the Terrible*, Vivien Leigh's grey and green (wasn't it once white and green?) dress for *Gone with the Wind*, even all those beaded evening dresses—carried a surprisingly powerful nostalgic charge. Among the scripts, one noted Ray's neat little drawings, Godard's scrawled capitals, the startlingly illiterate hands of many of the great. I can't remember a more attractive exhibition in this line, and one wishes it could be brought to London. Keaton's hat; a death mask of Mizoguchi; a torn Griffith contract: unexpectedly touching relics, from the art which used to think it had no history.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

"MAKE IT NEW," urged Ezra Pound all these many years ago, echoing what I take to be the great German/American tradition of originality at all costs. And indeed, most of the 20th century has been characterised by the frantic search for the new. But, one is forced to remind oneself, this is not the only virtue. Or rather, as the pussy-cat ought to have replied, it all depends on what you mean by *new*. I saw, for example, three excellent films at Cannes which I suppose ought to be dismissed as old-fashioned. And indeed, that is exactly what happened: *vieux jeu* they called Yutkevitch's *Lenin in Poland*; Forties vintage, Torre Nilsson's *The Eavesdropper*. And David Secter's *Winter Kept Us Warm* (shown in the Critics' Week) was weakly pushed aside as too conventional.

On another page of this issue I can be found proclaiming that the most important problem facing film directors today is the relation of plot to theme. Such a statement implies that the classical relation of theme and plot is no longer valid. And I think this is true for many film-makers, but not all. Perhaps the three films I mention above are not in the mainstream of today's cinema; but mainstream implies the existence of other streams, of quiet pools where some artists bring their oeuvre to perfection.

Even granting Yutkevitch's name, the title *Lenin in Poland* was enough to strike fear into the hearts of the toughest of festival-goers. So the surprise was all the greater to find that, avoiding the dreary hagiographic approach that has always been *de rigueur* for this kind of subject, Yutkevitch has made not only a moving film (this one might just have hoped for) but also a supremely charming one. Leaning heavily on Lenin's statement—more honoured in the breach than observed during the past forty years—that a new form has to be found to express the new revolutionary content, he resolutely opts for the intimate approach. The whole film is narrated—voice off—by Lenin, and there is no dialogue, partly, I imagine, to give



"UN HOMME ET UNE FEMME": JEAN-LOUIS TRINTIGNANT.

a distancing effect, partly to allow the freedom of interior monologue, so much greater than that of recorded statements. And we see Lenin the statesman, and Lenin the man, untying his shoelaces, going to the cinema, even sneaking into a church at the persuasion of a pretty girl. Whether Lenin was actually quite as jolly as he is made out to be is another matter: if he wasn't, he ought to have been. In any case, Yutkevitch's greatest achievement, it seems to me, is his evocation of the period, of the nostalgia for the pamphlet-writing, dream-filled days before the revolution.

Torre Nilsson's nightmare garden was first seen by the world at the Cannes Festival of ten years ago. He is still cultivating that garden, and why not? Especially when he comes up with such a completely realised work as *The Eavesdropper*. What we saw, I must add, was the Spanish version, the one preferred by Torre Nilsson. Because the film was financed by an American company, and because the two stars are English-speaking (Stathis Giallelis and Janet Margolin), an English version was also made. In recent years, Torre Nilsson has been much preoccupied with the neo-Fascist phenomenon in Argentina (*La Terraza*), but in this film he fuses this theme with his other main preoccupation, the self-destructing, claustrophobic, enclosed world. Usually a house, it is here a hotel, in which a young terrorist is forced to hole up for a fortnight. The hotel is a crumbling, 1900-style palace largely inhabited by Spanish republican refugees. Obsessed by his hatred of foreigners, the young man imagines that they are hatching some kind of plot against the nation which it is his

Continued on page 154

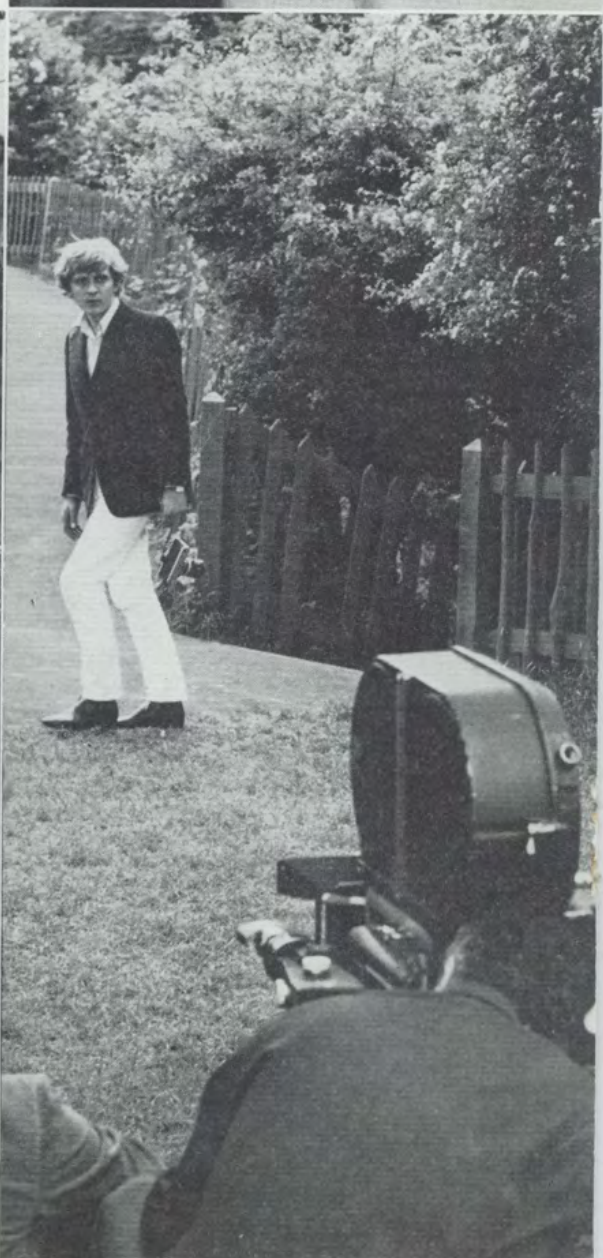
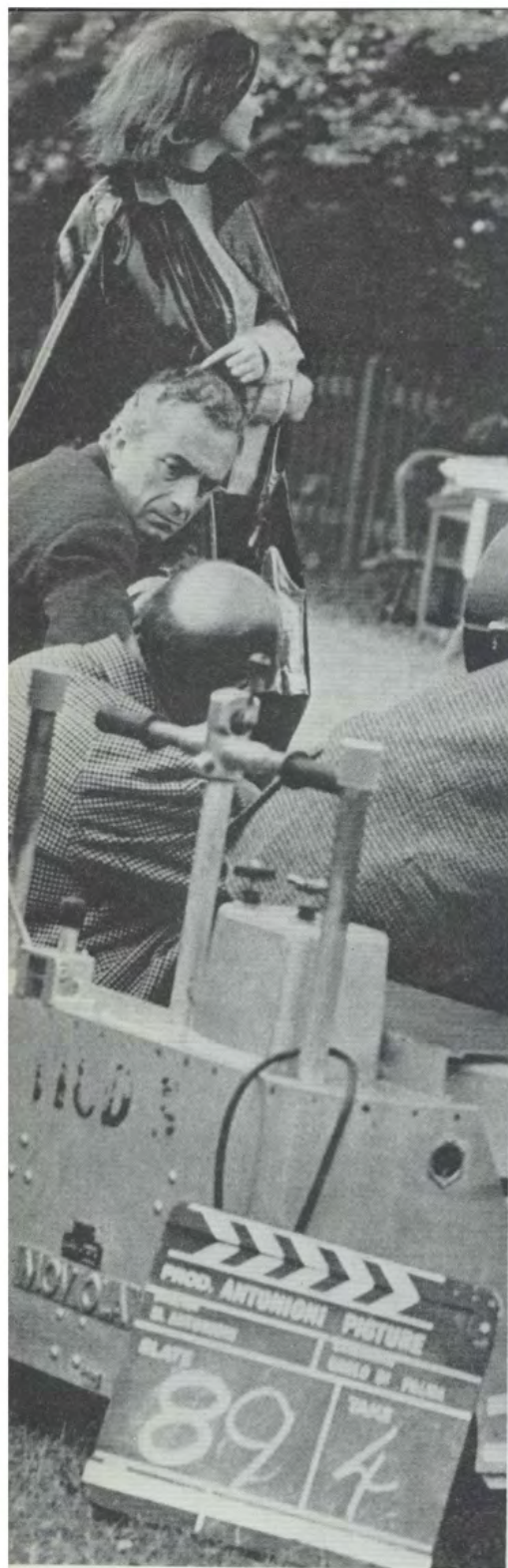
"LENIN IN POLAND".



ANTONIONI IN LONDON

photographs by
Peter Theobald

Provisionally titled 'The Blow Up',
Antonioni's new film is being shot in
conditions of some secrecy. Leading
actors are David Hemmings, Vanessa
Redgrave, Sarah Miles; the main
character is a photographer; and the film
is in colour.

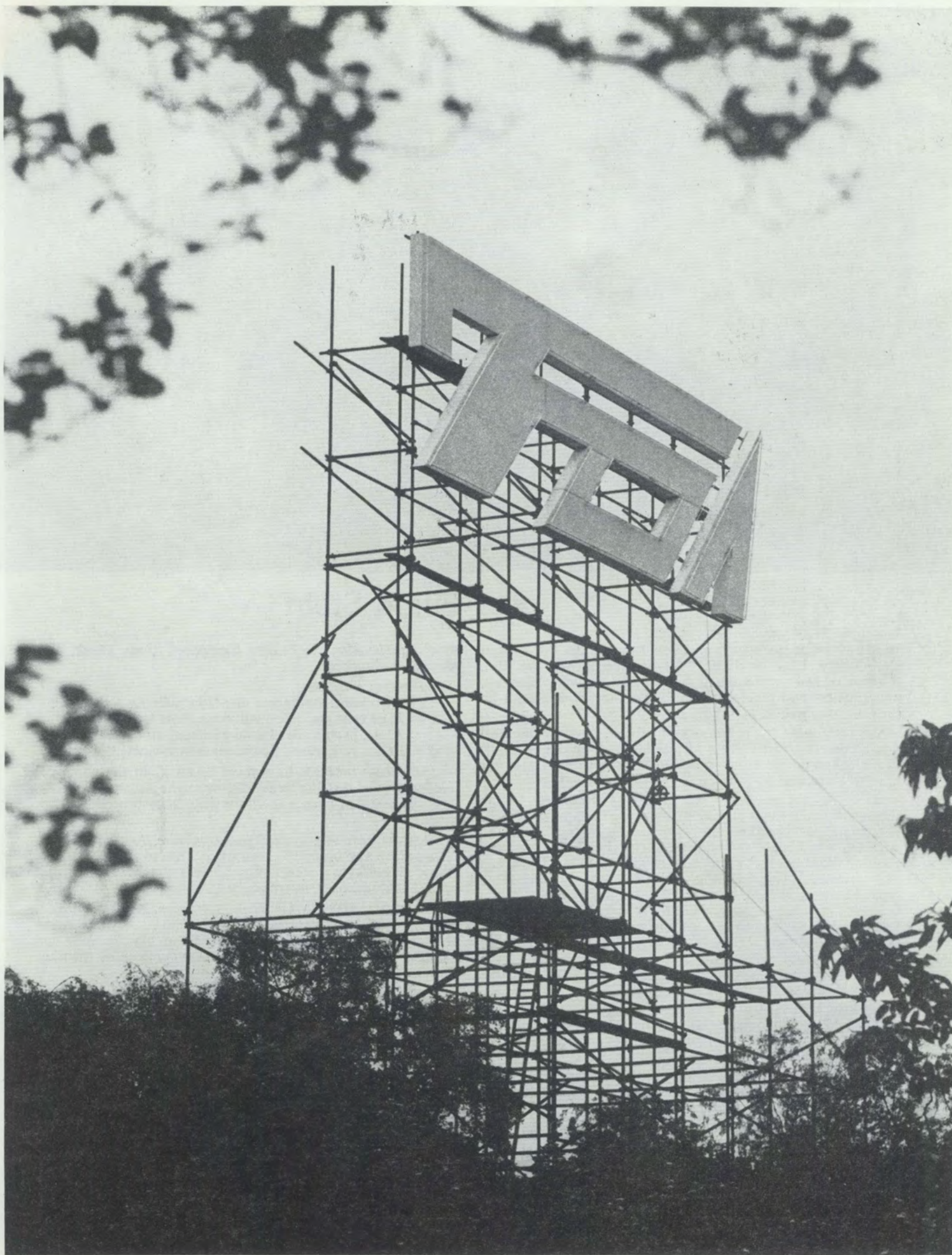


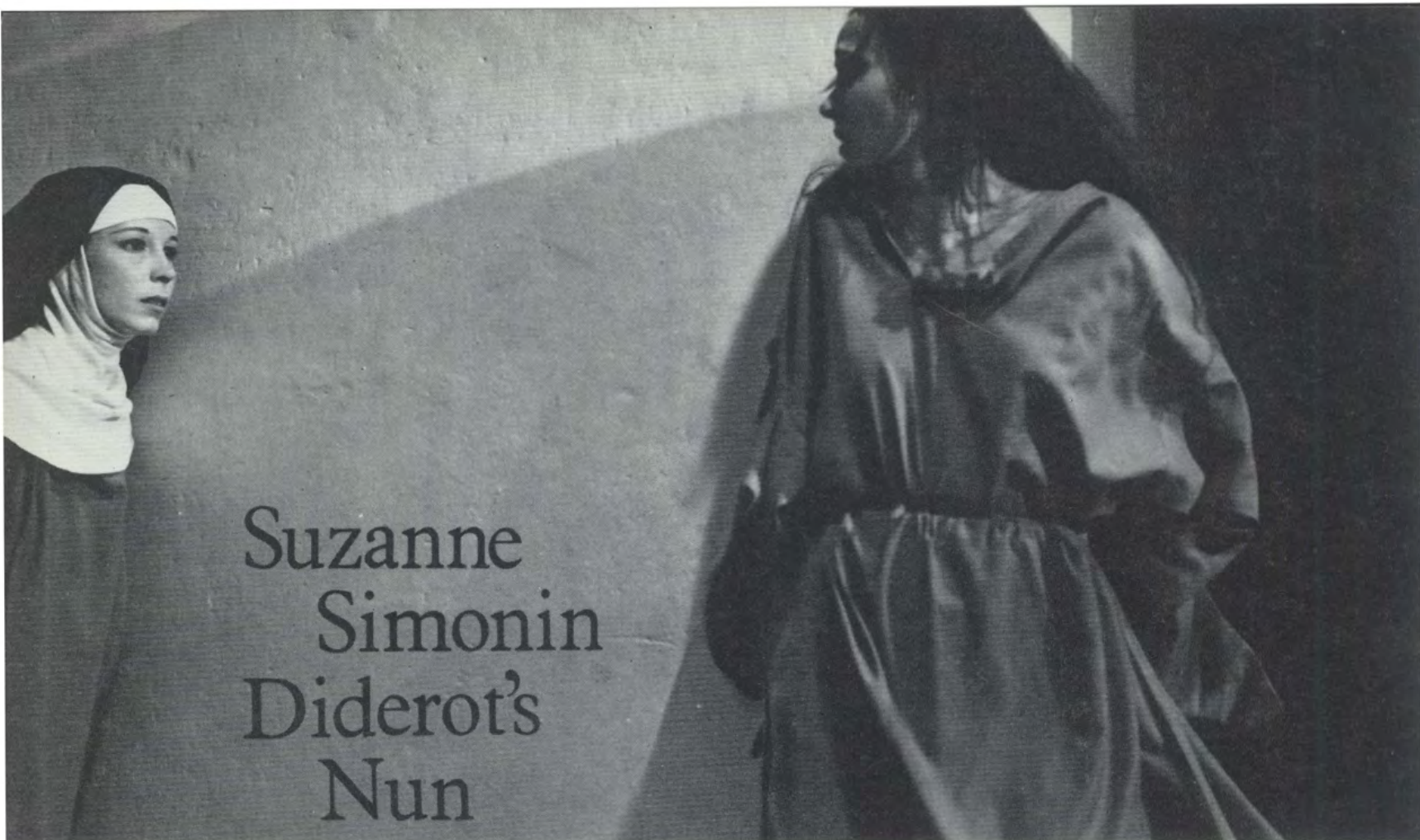
Far right: A 'meaningless' illuminated
sign overlooking the location in Maryon
Park, Woolwich. Partly erected to
provide an apparent light source
during night scenes.

Right: David Hemmings, who plays the
fashion photographer.

Above right: Antonioni with scriptwriter
Tonino Guerra.

Above: Antonioni. The girl standing
behind him is the translator.





Suzanne Simonin Diderot's Nun

Elliott Stein

MINISTER OF INFORMATION Yvon Bourges, to the French Senate, May 19, 1966: "We haven't burned the film, we're just preventing it from being shown. After all, museums contain objects which for certain reasons can't be shown to the public."

—ANNA KARINA: "It's a modern subject, because the girl doesn't accept society. She's a Christian, but she doesn't want to be locked up. In order to believe in something, you don't have to be locked up in it."

—JEAN-LUC GODARD: "I'm grateful to M. Bourges. At the time of Munich, I was playing marbles. At the time of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, I wore my first long trousers. During the Algerian war I had my first love affairs. I only knew about Fascism from books. 'They've taken off Danielle.' 'Pierre has been arrested.' 'They're going to shoot Etienne.' All of these typical sentences from the time of the Resistance and the Gestapo, I felt them strongly, but never in my flesh and blood, because I had the luck to be born too late. Yesterday, suddenly, everything changed: 'They've arrested Suzanne. The police came to Georges' office and to the film lab. They seized the prints.' Thank you, Yvon Bourges, for having permitted me a good look into the face of intolerance."

—THE BISHOP OF VERDUN: "We are told that the public is adult and should be able to see this film. What does that mean? One is adult only to the extent that one is well-informed . . . the public is profoundly ignorant."

—MEMO FROM M. CONTAMINE, director of French Radio and Television, to programme heads: "It is requested that no mention be made of the film *La Religieuse* on any broadcast."

—BOOKSTORE WINDOW on the Rue du Bac: "Read the book of the forbidden film. What a DISGRACE!"

—CATHOLIC PRIEST Père Lenfantin: "Oh, how I'd like to get M. Bourges into my confessional—that unworthy lackey of a totalitarian state! I'd tell him a thing or two!"

—LUIS BUNUEL to Francisco Rabal: "I've given up the idea of

shooting *The Monk* in France. Compared to my *Monk*, *The Nun* is for choirboys."

—POP SINGER ANTOINE:

"Monsieur Bourges a dit: 'J'interdis *La Religieuse*, Je ne veux pas qu'on voit cette chose ignominieuse.' Alors, je suis allé chez le pâtisseries du coin, Et des religieuses, j'en ai vu quatre-vingts."*

—RIGHT-WING WEEKLY *Carrefour*: "And if, in the name of freedom, we let this film be shown, we might just as well throw open the doors of France to all the dirty hairy beatniks of the earth."

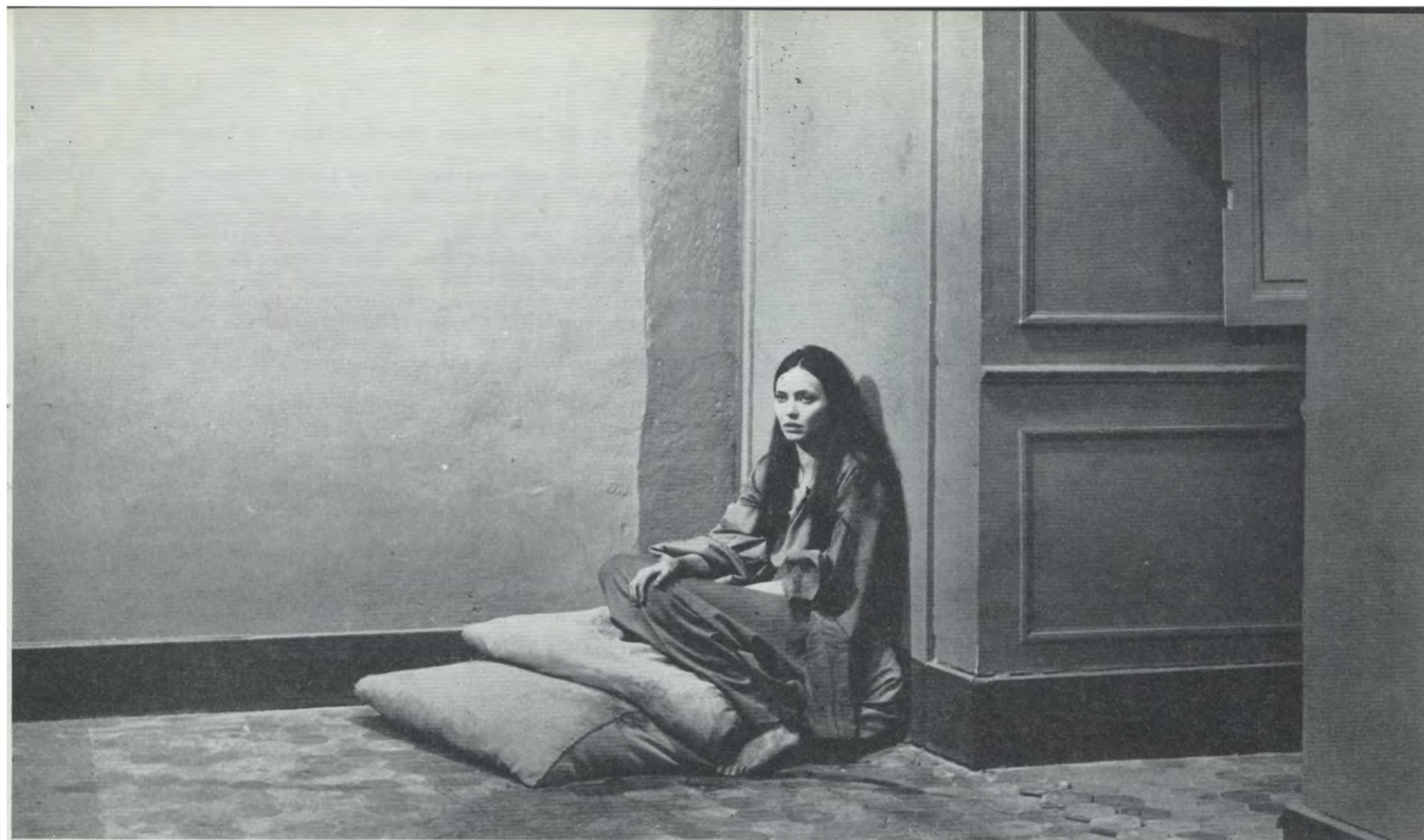
—FRANCOIS MAURIAC, in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, April 14, 1966: "It would never occur to those who chose to film Diderot's poisoned book to make a film against the Jews—whereas against the Catholics, anything goes!"

—CLAUDE MAURIAC, in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, April 14, 1966: "Rivette has given us a truly Christian film . . . God is more present in Rivette's heart, and thanks to him in ours as spectators of the film, than in those who condemned the film without even having seen it."

—GODARD, JEAN-LUC, in a letter to Malraux, André: "Your refusal to see me and answer the 'phone opened my eyes. What I thought was courage on your part when you saved my *Femme Mariée* from the axe, now that I see you accepting the ban on *La Religieuse* . . . I understand it was only cowardice. It's really sinister to see a Gaullist minister in 1966, afraid of an Encyclopedist of 1789. You won't understand why, in this letter I am speaking to you for the last time, nor why henceforth I won't shake your hand."

—CLAUDE CHABROL: "Censors should be put in convents."

* A *religieuse* is not only a nun, but also a common type of chocolate cream bun resembling a tiny nun. In April and May, 1966, it was impossible to ask for one in a Paris bakery without arousing general hilarity.



ANNA KARINA AS SUZANNE SIMONIN.

After the screening on March 31, I told Jacques Rivette how much I liked his film. What a relief that his troubles were over! He replied with a smile: "Now that the film has passed, I couldn't cut a frame of it myself, even if I wanted to." The following day, headlines on every Paris paper streamed the unbelievable news that de Gaulle's Minister of Information had overridden his own censors and banned the film in its entirety, both for France and for export. Thus began the biggest scandal in post-war French film history, a veritable *cause célèbre* whose effects, two months later, have just begun to make themselves felt.

The film is a fair image of Diderot's classic—a book far ahead of its time, which in accuracy of psychological analysis rivals Dostoevsky. 16-year-old Suzanne (Anna Karina) is put by her family into a convent for mere financial expediency (her two elder sisters have been married off with comfortable dowries, and there is nothing left for her); a common lot for youngest daughters under the Ancien Régime. When the day comes to take her vows, she refuses, but she is silenced and carried off. At Longchamp Convent, the girl is befriended by Mme. de Moni, a kind, saintly Superior. Suzanne is deeply religious, but does not feel called to a nun's vocation; she finds convent life unbearable, especially after Moni's death. The harsh new Superior persecutes her; Suzanne resorts to the courts in an attempt to have her forced vows rescinded. She is transferred to a worldly convent, where a Superior with Lesbian tendencies, Mme. de Chelle (Diderot's character is drawn from Adelaide d'Orléans, a notorious Abbess), falls in love with her. Aided by Dom Morel, her confessor, who himself had been forced into the priesthood, she escapes. After three years of convent life, the corrupt outside world, the freedom she had sought, merely present a descent into hell. Confused, penniless, desperate, the girl kills herself.

Rivette's work starts slowly, coldly, academically, with a few family scenes which lack conviction. Gradually, the director's austere, sober fidelity to the spirit of the book rewards us with simply the most telling portrayal of 18th

century society ever to appear in French cinema. In spite of his *Cahiers du Cinéma* background, the technical approach is very classic: this is not a New Wave *Nun*. Rivette is a fan of Griffith, and a decided Griffithian pathos marks the film, a wilted scent of *Broken Blossoms*. ("What a role for Lillian Gish!" co-scenarist Jean Gruault once remarked.) The soundtrack, with its astute occasional use of neo-Japanese resonances, is the only nod to contemporary eclecticism. The religious characters are far from ridiculous or hateful (Madame de Moni, for instance, who disappears after a few lines in the book, emerges, beautifully sustained by Micheline Presle, as a full-blown portrait of divine goodness and grace). They are seen as victims of a life-distorting society in which most women were objects to be chained to marriage or the convent.

When religious life is not the result of spontaneous engagement, it can lead to depravity: the Ancien Régime, in encouraging such practices, planted the seeds of its own destruction. These nuns are pitiful prisoners of flesh and spirit, and the story gains in force through Rivette's apparent refusal to pass judgment. The real subject of *La Religieuse* has nothing to do with religion. It is concerned with the arbitrary exercise of power. The ban which de Gaulle's government has placed on the film only emphasises the timelessness of the theme.

* * *

Rivette is 36, one of the founding editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. In 1958, he made his first feature, *Paris Nous Appartient*, a haunting, personal, unsettling work. Not a public success, it left its mark in film circles. In 1962, the pre-censor board rejected his scenario for *The Nun*. It was rewritten, toned down three times to obtain the visa without which shooting on a film may not commence in France. The title was changed to *Suzanne Simonin, Diderot's Nun*, to indicate that it was a close adaptation of an 18th century classic, not a comment on contemporary convent life. Producer Georges de Beauregard (Godard's *A Bout de Souffle* and *Le Petit Soldat*, Demy's *Lola*, Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7*, etc.) added a disclaimer title explaining that it was a work of fiction. After the adulterated script was



accepted by the pre-censors, shooting began in September 1965.

At once, the alert was sounded by Canon Dewavrin, an official of the Catholic Centrale du Cinéma which affixes its moral ratings on films to church doors. A group named *Les Saintes Ames* (The Saintly Souls) circulated petitions. In Catholic schools, children were ordered to write out dictated letters as part of their class duties, attacking the as yet unfinished film. These letters were brought home to parents to be signed and sent to the Minister of Information. The Minister received so many letters from convents that he phoned the Archbishopric to request that nuns be sent to his office to help sort his mail.

On March 22, 1966, the Censor Board approved the completed film. (The Board numbers 23 members, chosen by the government from high functionaries, seven of whom are delegated by Ministries; the rest are sociologists, magistrates or members of associations to protect French families.) M. Bourges was not pleased with the Board's decision, and on March 29 invited it to view the film again and to reconsider outlawing it. One of the members brought a Mother Superior to the screening—she declared that the film was quite just, adding: "All that's happened hundreds of times in convents." An 'expert' sent by the Minister to supervise the screening turned out to be the head cop in France: Maurice Grimaud, director of the Sûreté Nationale. He explained to the censors that scenes of public disorder might break out if *The Nun* were released. In spite of these pressures, the Board again passed the film by a large majority, only restricted for viewing to people over eighteen. It did recommend that it should not be exported to any part of Africa, to Madagascar, Syria, Lebanon, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia—countries where there are French missions, and the natives, not realising that the film was taking place in the 18th century, might receive a distorted view of modern nuns, "whose cultural activities participate in the world-wide radiance of France." This was not enough for M. Bourges, who in an April Fool's Day announcement which made history, proclaimed that he had placed a total ban on the film, for France and for exportation.

The outcry was indescribable. Never before had so much fuss been made over a film which only a handful had seen. The ancient clerical and anti-clerical rancours, always lying only slightly beneath the surface of French life, in spite of the theoretical separation of Church and State, rose to the surface. Suzanne made the front pages for months. *Le Monde* ran a day-by-day feature, *L'Affaire de La Religieuse*, to which one opened, as if to a daily horoscope or weather report. Protests cut across party and sectarian lines. *Le Figaro*, arbiter of bourgeois taste, editorialised: "The adult public is as good a judge as the government as to what films it should see. Bourges' move will arouse anti-clerical passions that the film would never have awakened. Prohibitions dictated by fear have never helped the truth." *Paris Presse* reported that the Censor Board was considering resigning *en masse*—being overruled by Bourges had made them look like "clowns."

Beauregard drew up a petition which was intended to total 1,789 signatures. This inspiring figure was soon bypassed, as most of the important celebrities of French publishing, journalism, arts and letters, were quick to sign. The producer also instigated court proceedings to annul Bourges' decision, accusing the Minister of "misappropriation of power." Beauregard lodged a lawsuit against the Minister for irresponsibility in permitting the pre-censors to pass the script after suggested cuts had been accepted, and then suppressing the finished film once it had been shot at a cost of over two million francs. The federation of French Ciné-Clubs (500 clubs with 200,000 members) placed itself at Beauregard's disposal for any action deemed necessary. 270,000 members of the schoolteachers' syndicate defended the film. Cinemas distributed protest postcards to queuing film-goers. *Réforme*, the leading Protestant weekly, stated: "The government cannot defend the Church's honour by limiting freedom of expres-

ABOVE: "THE HARSH NEW SUPERIOR (FRANCINE BERGE, LEFT) PERSECUTES HER..." CENTRE: LISELOTTE PULVER AS MADAME DE CHELLE. BELOW: KARINA'S OPTIMISTIC ARRIVAL AT THE WORLDLY CONVENT PRESIDED OVER BY LISELOTTE PULVER (CENTRE).

sion. These pressure groups have themselves placed the honour of the Church in doubt." And, by a coincidence, Diderot turned out as the subject for this year's nation-wide *concours général* examination in *lycées*.

Bourges received letters from a hundred professors of French literature in American universities, protesting "the puritanism and authoritarianism your decision reflects." New editions of *The Nun* (it has never been on the Index) were sold out as soon as publishers could get them to bookstores—some of them so hastily printed that the proofs were hardly corrected. (Benedictine Superior Marie-Yvonne: "How many people will now read Diderot's book, which is even more noxious than the film!") Director Philippe de Broca, who had recently been decorated as a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters, sent his decorations back to de Gaulle as protest. Citizens of the city of Bourges requested that it be re-named Diderot or Rivette. On April 25, a "Free The Nun" tour of French universities began at Rennes, with Chabrol and Rivette addressing student assemblies.

On April 26, a mass meeting was held at the Mutualité Hall, in Paris, presided over by Daniel Mayer, president of the League of the Rights of Man. Sixty film directors, headed by Alain Resnais, Vadim, René Clair, Jules Dassin, Chris Marker, Abel Gance, gave appalling accounts of how their work had suffered at the hands of censors. Rivette revealed that well-intentioned mediators were attempting to persuade Malraux to permit his film to be shown eventually on a restricted circuit of art cinemas and film societies. Rivette refused, asserting that it would create a dangerous precedent, confining any future nonconformist films in a movie "ghetto".

An order had come from on high that no mention of *The Nun* was to be made on radio or TV. The signal privilege of breaking the silence was granted on April 19—but only to Bishop Veuillot. He informed TV audiences that the film had best remain unseen, adding, "Of course, it is the government which has banned it in the public interest. The Church bears no responsibility for the decision." This echoed a statement in the Vatican's *Osservatore Romano*, chiding those Catholic publications which had come out in favour of screen freedom. The Vatican paper concluded: "It was the French government which freely took the decision to ban the film."

* * *

When Malraux announced that *The Nun* would be allowed to go to Cannes, there was some surprise. But in France the cinema is placed under two thumbs: the Minister of Information, for censorship, the Minister of Culture for administrative and artistic matters. Which thumb represented the government: the one which banned the film, or the one which sent it to Cannes? The fog lightens if it is realised that, in April, all of the French film directors who had a completed work proposed for Cannes this year signed a declaration stating that if the ban were not lifted they would personally create a scandal at the festival. By sending *The Nun* to Cannes, without lifting the ban, Malraux shrewdly calmed spirits and avoided trouble—at least during the festival. The same hand wags both fingers. But Rivette's forbidden fruit had been sprayed by its enemies with an illusory reputation: many of those invited to view it at Cannes came expecting a sort of *120 Days in Convent Sodom*. They were bound to be disappointed. None the less, Beauregard sold the film to distributors from eight countries. *Qui vivra verra!*

Meanwhile, the brouhaha continued in Paris. Bourges was questioned by members of the opposition in both the Chamber and the Senate, while François Mitterand taxed the ban as a sin against intelligence. Some of the debating was on a truly Mad Tea Party level. An example, from the Assembly: Deputy Georges Germain: "The government yielded to the demands of a few bags of letters, while it pays no attention to the repeated demands of thousands of striking workers." (Loud cackle from Gaullist Deputy Abbé Laudrin, who is recalled to order by the President.) Germain continues: "I saw all of the film, the Abbé Laudrin left after the beginning. Had he stayed, he would have seen that it is a film which honours the French cinema and which pleads the cause of religious sentiment."

Abbé Laudrin: "I saw at least half of the film, and you don't understand any of it!"

Bourges addressed Parliament, stating: "Under the Fifth Republic we have only banned an average of one film every two months. Twice as many were banned under the preceding régime. One can thus say that the Fifth Republic is twice as liberal as the Fourth . . . We sent the film to Cannes because we decided it would be unfair to deprive the actors of the reward which their performances might merit at the festival."

Some violent polemics were spun by the film review *Positif* and Michel Cournot, film critic for *Le Nouvel Observateur*. *Positif* sent readers a note which reasoned as follows: "Legal action, petitions are insufficient. The government bans the film, saying offended Catholics might disturb public order if it's seen. Since we're treated like children, let's behave like children. Pick several films in production approved by the Catholic Centre—decide that our consciences as atheists or Freemasons or Marxists, or what have you, are offended by them. If they are shown, we will disturb public order. We are proposing a stupid method here. It's not our fault if it's the only kind certain people will understand. Bourges or Aunt Yvonne* won't pay any heed to our petitions. The ban on *The Nun* is a declaration of war, and the protests of a few priests are just hypocritical alibis for the Church. Vulgar anticlericalism is the only answer that is not merely platonic."

Cournot reasoned: "Cannes was a swindle. French *cinéastes* should have boycotted the festival until the ban was lifted. We mustn't be fooled into thinking the interdict is just a blunder by one minister. This is false. Behind the ban there is the Church, behind the Church there is the Fifth Republic. De Gaulle, here as elsewhere, is letting the Church dictate orders to the State. The Church considers that the cinema belongs to it and that it can dictate to everyone what to see."

* * *

In many countries it has been assumed for years that controls on the French cinema were liberal because many Gallic films exhibit superficially frank sexuality, with bare breasts a trademark as common as horses in American Westerns. But bared breasts do not a free cinema make. Even previous to the Fifth Republic, film projects which contained realistic references to religious or military themes, or even to current events in general, were usually squelched. When Vadim was asked why he only made erotic films, he replied: "The only kind of movie which won't have censor trouble here is a sex movie." There is no real tradition of political cinema in France. The French equivalent of *Advise and Consent*, *The Best Man*, or *The Grapes of Wrath*, would be unthinkable. Parisian critics recently found that *The Americanization of Emily* was the last word in audacity! Henry Chapier pertinently wrote in *Combat*: "The ban on *The Nun* is covered by nauseating hypocrisy and reveals the intellectual level of the princes who govern us. Rivette's sober work is tabu, but they pass the striptease films which clutter up our screens. The régime merely wants to save appearances. Mediocrity and vulgarity in films are approved because these qualities are not at odds with respectability, that sacrosanct dogma of the Fifth Republic."

Film censorship on this debased level does not exist in a vacuum. It is but one obscurantist aspect of contemporary France; censorship of literature has been at least as severe in recent years. Although publishers have taken things lying down, the film industry, as of *The Nun*, is beginning to counter-attack in force. All of the people will not accept being treated as children all of the time. France is, after all, a country where the cinema is taken very seriously as an art form, is scrutinised more closely than anywhere else. Many *cinéphiles* are concerned these days with one of the cogent questions asked by Claude Mauriac: "How on earth will the cinema ever denounce injustices of our own period, if those of a long-buried century in a classic book are still considered too dangerous?" Meanwhile, give Bourges a *Zero For Conduct*; but remember that Vigo's masterpiece was banned in France for twelve years.

* Madame de Gaulle—whose Puritanical pietism, it is rumoured, was not alien to the Ministerial decision.



PERMANENTLY BANNED? "L'AGE D'OR".

The silence of Fanny Hill

Neville Hunnings

The author of this article is a lawyer who recently completed the first doctoral thesis on film censorship to be written in Britain. In view of the recent changes in attitudes to censorship, we asked Mr. Hunnings to comment on these and possible future developments. A fuller analysis of the background will be found in Mr. Hunnings' forthcoming book, Film Censors and the Law.

AT LAST THE LOG JAM seems to be breaking up. For fifty years the cinema has seemed securely in the grip of the censors with no hope of reprieve, while in country after country the theatre has been freed and restrictions on other media have been increasingly disapproved. The pressure has now built up to such an extent that not only is film censorship suddenly fighting for its life, but the criminal laws of obscenity too are beginning to crumble. These two seemingly impregnable bastions of unfree speech have all but fallen in the United

States and Scandinavia, and strong liberalising tendencies can be seen in Britain too. This is not to say that reaction has been defeated. The Siniavski and Daniel affair in Russia, the uproar over *La Religieuse* in France, the inclusion of censorship provisions in the new Italian film aid law, the *Zanzara* affair (also in Italy), the Australian attempt to centralise book censorship in the federal Department of Customs, the strong attacks on the independence of the BBC, all these might be called normal; they are certainly not unexpected. What is new is the systematic and inexorable examination by courts, writers and social welfare workers in North America, Scandinavia and New Zealand of the arguments adduced in support of censorship, and their steady stripping away of the cant and ignorance surrounding it.

* * *

AS EXPECTED, developments in Britain have not shown any such logical clarity. Changes have occurred adventitiously, through chance conjunction of dedicated individuals and a favourable power situation, and have moved in a rapid pendulum pattern. A series of prosecutions of respectable book publishers in 1954 was followed by the reforming Obscene Publications Act, 1959 (largely piloted through by the present Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins), and by the revolutionary verdict of acquittal in the *Lady Chatterley* case in 1960 (counsel for the publishers being led by the present Lord Chancellor). Immediately afterwards the reverse swing began, which culminated in the Bow Street magistrate's decision that *Fanny Hill* was obscene, and in the passing of the Obscene Publications Act, 1964, to "remedy certain deficiencies."

With regard to films, the changes have been more subtle. The present Secretary of the British Board of Film Censors has shown a pronounced if somewhat cautious tendency towards greater freedom. This has so far revealed itself in a desire to reduce the number of films given an X certificate (the abortive proposals for an advisory AA certificate), and in support for the development of commercially operated film clubs. The principle behind the latter—that minority groups should be entitled to see films censor-free—suggests a restriction of the censorship function to that of protecting the mass undiscriminating cinema audience from unwelcome shock; and if this is accepted it might prove to be the Trojan horse which will give the abolitionists their chance. The principle is already embodied in s. 5 of the Cinematograph Act, 1952, which exempts from censorship shows given to private groups, or given free, or given by exempted non-profit-making organisations. The step from this to exempting all shows given to the paying public by exempted organisations, whether profit-making or not, is perfectly logical and has much to be said for it, especially in such cases as the London Film Festival, which has hitherto been subject to censorship on three days out of every seven.

A more fundamental attack on film censorship, although not presented in such a radical way, was made by the Greater London Council in October 1965. The Council then recognised, for the first time outside the United States and Quebec, what is the true evil in any form of censorship—the wide, basically irresponsible discretion exercised by an official. And taking the logical step, the GLC resolved that it would only ban films which offended against certain parts of the criminal law, or more precisely, that films should not be exhibited within the Council's jurisdiction if they are likely to encourage or incite to crime, or to lead to disorder, or to stir up hatred against any section of the public in Great Britain on grounds of colour, race or ethnic or national origin (this is taken from the Race Relations Act, 1965), or the effect of which is, if taken as a whole, such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely to see them (this is taken from the Obscene Publications Act, 1959).

This is a much more satisfactory position, for if accurately applied the new rule will mean that only illegal films will be banned (which is the position in the United States under the recent Supreme Court decisions). It also emphasises the need to consider films as a whole. Both the racial hatred and the

obsenity rules apply expressly to works "taken as a whole," and this may yet have a seminal influence in restricting the censorial cutting of films.

There still remains the difficulty that it is the task of a court and not of a group of councillors or officials to determine the legality of any act. Trial before a court provides certain procedural safeguards for an accused or defendant, and there may be difficult questions of law, or evidence, with which the county councils and BBFC are not equipped to deal. This is illustrated by the Board's solitary foray into the law of defamation, when it banned *Operation Teutonic Sword* as a libel on General Speidel. It was quite obvious that the General's remedies in the courts were perfectly adequate to protect him, as was shown by his subsequent action for an injunction after the LCC passed the film over the Board's ban.

The effect of the new GLC rule is difficult to assess at present. The Board services all licensing authorities throughout Britain, and it will not change its general approach until a large number of authorities have followed London's lead. In any case, the extent of any practical change can only be seen when the GLC Licensing Committee has had enough time to show how it will deal with specific applications to it under the rule (no noticeable change having been felt by the Committee so far). If the Board found itself being continually overruled by the GLC on appeal—which has not yet happened—it might have to issue two sets of certificates, one for London and one for the rest; or work out a quite new system; or else go neurotic. But the new rule will only affect bans (and perhaps cuts), and will have no effect on operation of the Board's classification system. And it is in this direction that the future of the Board probably lies.

* * *

The theatrical developments are, as they should be, more dramatic. Theatre Workshop was prosecuted in 1958 for allowing unscripted, and so necessarily uncensored, ad-libbing in its production of *You Won't Always Be On Top* (counsel for the defence again being led by the present Lord Chancellor). This was immediately followed by the formation of an unofficial Theatre Censorship Reform Committee, members of which included Wayland Young, Benn Levy, Kenneth Tynan, Roy Jenkins, Peter Hall and C. H. Rolph. The Committee worked on a draft Bill for a year, but after the Lord Chamberlain's announcement in October 1958 that he would liberalise stage censorship, and for fear of losing this tangible advance by stirring up reaction, the Committee decided to dissolve itself in April 1959.

The theatrical climate changed rapidly during the subsequent years, and the Lord Chamberlain's liberalising gesture was absorbed and overpassed. Instead of the 1958 concern over homosexuality in plays, the present emphasis is on the portrayal of indecent acts on stage—transvestites (*A Patriot for Me*), masturbation (*Spring Awakening*), and most recently the stoning to death of a baby (*Saved*) in a context reminiscent of the film *491*. This has culminated in a triple explosion earlier this year. The House of Lords, after a singularly ill-informed and smug debate in February, resolved to set up a select joint committee to examine stage censorship with a view to finding an alternative to the Lord Chamberlain; but there seemed to be little support among the peers for the abolition of theatre censorship altogether. The following month Michael Foot introduced a Censorship of Plays Bill, which however lapsed on the dissolution of Parliament (as did the House of Lords resolution, which has to be passed again formally before the Committee can be set up). Then, in April, the Lord Chamberlain's long-awaited test case on the lawfulness of theatre clubs as a means of evading the censor's ban on certain plays was decided by the Marylebone magistrate against the English Stage Society, which had presented *Saved* at the Royal Court Theatre as a club performance.

The magistrate held that all plays presented "for hire", i.e. all commercial or non-amateur productions, were censorable under the Theatres Act, 1843, even if they were given in a private house; and thereby he closed the valuable safety valve which, since the early days of Shaw, has allowed plays of literary merit banned by the Lord Chamberlain to be per-

formed to club members. Whether this will have the effect expected by Kenneth Tynan of intensifying the abolitionist case will depend on the strength of the latent forces of reaction. In 1952 the LCC strongly opposed clause 5 of the Cinematograph Bill, which aimed at exempting film society shows from censorship control; and the theatre in England is still mistrusted by far too many people for the abolition of its censorship, now practically non-existent in Western Europe, to be a foregone conclusion.

A new factor with regard to censorship of plays, if not yet of films, is Britain's acceptance in January of the two optional clauses of the European Convention on Human Rights, thereby accepting the right of an individual to petition the European Commission of Human Rights and also accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court of Human Rights. This means that an aggrieved individual can now 'sue' the British Government under the Convention, Article 10 of which guarantees freedom of expression. If the Royal Court were now to pursue their appeals up to the Commission and the Court of Human Rights, it is not inconceivable that theatre censorship could be found to be in breach of Article 10.

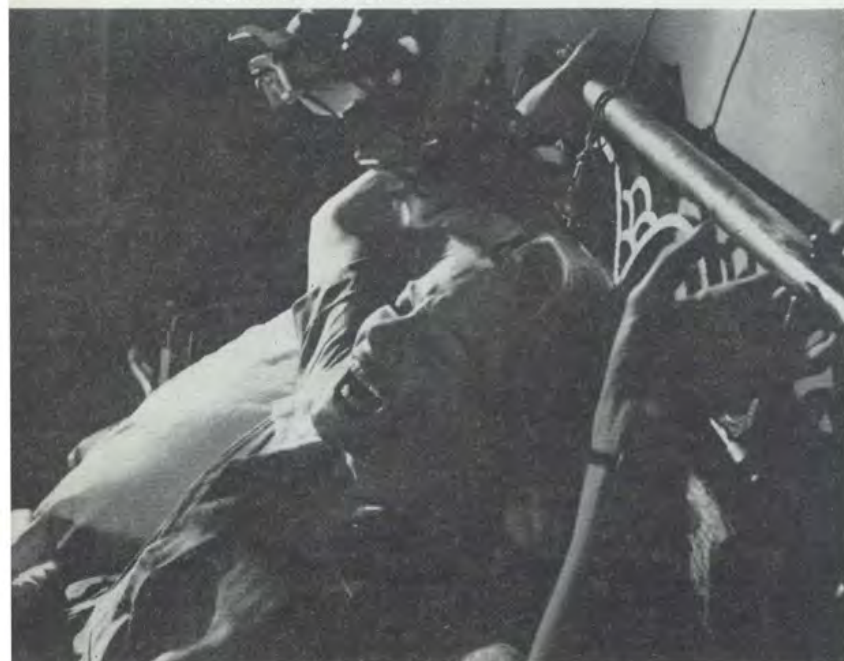
A similar appeal against film censorship might be less successful, for whereas theatre censorship is practically obsolete in most countries of the Council of Europe, film censorship is still the rule in all except Belgium. It is likely, therefore, to be regarded as a necessary exception to the guarantee given by the Article. It is, however, just possible that skilful argument based on the U.S. Supreme Court judgments since 1952 might win the day even in Europe.

But whatever the particular result of an appeal to the European Commission of Human Rights, the mere bringing of the appeal might have the effect of causing the Government to repeal the legislation so that the case would be dropped, as has happened on more than one occasion already.

* * *

The position is much more straightforward in Sweden and Denmark. Denmark is not only extremely liberal in its film censorship (more so than any other Scandinavian country); it is also very permissive with regard to books. Not even Lo Duca or the Olympia Press in Paris, in the days before Girodias was martyred by the British Home Office and Gaullist puritanism, contained illustrations to match in frankness those in the books by Brusendorff and Henningsen on open sale in respectable Copenhagen bookshops. But the Home Office has made itself felt even there, and just as its complaint caused the French authorities to find the English, but not the French, edition of *Lolita* obscene, so it led the Danish police to

"THE SILENCE": INGRID THULIN.



prosecute successfully the English edition of *Fanny Hill* in 1957.

However, the prosecution of a Danish edition, in circumstances somewhat similar to those of the Old Bailey trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, resulted in the Danish Supreme Court unanimously agreeing with the two lower courts and acquitting the book in April 1965. The grounds for acquittal were, significantly enough, the present freedom in portrayal of sexual matters and the recent appearance of so many books containing extensively realistic descriptions of sexual matters. This has been followed by great activity of both police and publishers, relating especially to the pseudonymous French *Histoire d'O*, the Swedish collection *Is Pornography Harmful?* and some works of de Sade; by lively discussion in the press; and by the adoption of "pornography" as one of the normal genres under which Danish book production is classified in the newspapers every year.

It was the inclusion of two to three minutes of pornographic film which led to censor trouble for Knud Leif Thomsen's film *Gift* (a pun meaning both "married" and "poison"), and resulted in an unusual form of censorship by covering the forbidden images with a white cross (shades of Loie Fuller's *Passion Dance*!), since the sequences are essential to the film and cannot be cut. This willingness to take account of the artistic value or pretensions of films (and also books: the problem with *Histoire d'O* is that due weight cannot be given to the eminence of its author until its author is known, and this is a secret that has remained hidden even from the French) is a characteristic of Scandinavian censorship; and has led to the creation by the Danish Minister of Justice of a committee in July 1963 to study the whole question of film censorship.

The committee is expected to recommend the total abolition of censorship for adults; but its report will probably be delayed by the decision of the Nordic Council in February 1965 to harmonise film censorship in the Nordic countries and to initiate studies of the influence of films on their audiences. The Swedish Film Institute has begun a series of such studies and has issued so far three reports which, although necessarily inconclusive, reveal some illuminating data, such as the influence on an audience's reaction of the knowledge or belief that a film has been censored. This is being paralleled in the United States by research into the effect of film violence on viewers, an account of which was given at the Congress on psychology held in Chicago in December 1965.

The Danish film censorship committee is now co-operating with the more recently formed Swedish film censorship committee and joint meetings have been held. The Swedish committee grew out of the scandal over Bergman's *The Silence*, which was passed with its sexual intercourse scenes intact; and Sjöman's *491*, which was banned by the censors (only three other Swedish films had ever been totally banned before) and finally passed with some cuts after appeal had been made to the Government. During the uproar, which also involved the Ombudsman, the Minister of Education, who is responsible for the Board of Censors, stated that he was in favour of abolition of censorship for adults.

* * *

The Danish *A Stranger Knocks* (*En Fremmed Banker På*) and the Swedish *491* have also been in large measure responsible for recent revolutionary changes in the United States. In 1952 the U.S. Supreme Court first began to take notice of film censorship by declaring that a state could not censor a film on grounds of sacrilege (Rossellini's *Il Miracolo*). During the years following, Pennsylvania and Ohio abandoned their film censorship systems. Then the Supreme Court held last year that a Maryland exhibitor was entitled to refuse to submit for censorship a film which was admitted to be quite innocuous (*Revenge at Daybreak*). The basis of its judgment was that the constitutional guarantee of free speech covered all expression that was not withdrawn from protection (in practice, almost the only type of expression which is thus unprotected is obscene matter). The censorship procedure, applied to both innocent and obscene matter alike, oppressed the innocent films by depriving their exhibitor of proper opportunities for argument and lacked rules covering burden of proof, evidence,



THE TRANSVESTITE BALL IN JOHN OSBORNE'S "A PATRIOT FOR ME". PHOTOGRAPH BY ZOE DOMINIC.

etc. Consequently, it was unlawful for a censorship board to censor. All it could do was to examine films and refer those it thought obscene to the courts for immediate determination of their obscenity.

This sounded the death knell of official censorship. Some weeks later the Supreme Court struck down New York's film censorship law on the same grounds, the film in that case being *A Stranger Knocks*, which had been cut by even the Danish censors and which contained a very explicit scene of sexual intercourse. Maryland attempted to continue operating a censorship board under the new rules, but all the films it referred to the courts, including *A Stranger Knocks*, have been held not obscene. Virginia has tried unsuccessfully to do the same. And Kansas is now fighting a test case through the courts which seems bound to end in the same way as the Maryland case.

A last line of attack has now been tried by the U.S. Customs which, for the first time since the Hedy Lamarr *Extase* in 1936, has attempted to prohibit the import of a film, *491*, as obscene. This has been upheld by one federal judge and further developments are awaited.

What is perhaps of even greater importance than the final abolition of half a dozen state censorship laws is the parallel influence these developments, or the state of mind which they reflect, are having upon the Production Code and its supporting organs. This has been partly caused by the strong tendency of state legislatures, especially in New York and Dallas, to support the idea of classification of films, a practice to which the American film industry has traditionally been strongly opposed. Consequently it was announced last October that a sweeping revision of the three Codes (Production, Advertising and Titles) was being examined, the aim being to remove the specific prohibitions and give greater latitude to the Code Administrator (at present the relatively enlightened Geoffrey Shurlock) to judge a film in the light of basic principles and by its tone and treatment, whatever its subject matter. It may be significant that this came at a time when the MPAA's morale was so low that it had still not appointed a new President to succeed Eric Johnston, who died in the summer of 1963.*

It is certainly significant that the main pressure group behind the Code, the Legion of Decency, has itself been

* Jack J. Valenti, previously Special Assistant to President Johnson, was appointed President of the MPAA at the end of April, 1966.

reformed, and has changed its main task from attacking objectionable films to encouraging good ones. As a symbol of this, it has changed its name to the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures, and from this year is to give awards for films whose artistic vision and expression best embody authentic human values. The first batch of awards, which include *Darling*, *Giulietta degli Spiriti* and *Nobody Waved Goodbye*, illustrates a new sophistication in approach, which can also be seen in the reforms in Quebec and in the more subtle revised classification scheme introduced by the Legion. Much of this may also be due to a changed climate at the Vatican under John XXIII and Paul VI, a change which is illustrated by the abolition of the infamous *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* and of the office of the Inquisition earlier this year.

* * *

With such rapid and far-reaching developments taking place, it may be illuminating to look at two relatively new institutions which have been created to deal with problems of censorship and obscenity in a more civilised manner. Both the Quebec film censorship board and the New Zealand Indecent Publications Tribunal work from the assumption that books and films are to be taken seriously; and that even if they are in some instances trash, trashiness is a subjective question of degree which should be looked at with greater urbanity than is shown by the normal censor, policeman or judge. The educative force of such an approach may be an essential ingredient in the process of abolishing censorship, and it is impressive to see the sober and deliberate way in which the Swedish and Danish censors, who have been more aware of artistic values than others, are going about the task of abolishing themselves.

Quebec used to be one of the more conservative Canadian provinces, and its approach to film censorship was very restrictive. But under the influence of the new reform Government and, more specifically, of the Montreal Film Festival, the situation has changed drastically. In 1961 the Attorney General appointed a committee to study film censorship. Its interim report, issued in February 1962, has been the basis of a remarkable change. Briefly, the Committee proposed: that the board of censors should not censor but should rather classify (using age limits of 13, 17 and 21); that it should be a means of informing the public of the nature of films being shown, of their artistic value and any emotional or moral shocks they might contain; and that it should be a means of warning the authorities of any film which it considered obscene or seditious and hence a danger to public order. The board should maintain an extensive service of documentation on

LETICIA ROMAN IN THE GERMAN FILM OF "FANNY HILL", BANNED BY THE BBFC BUT PASSED BY VARIOUS LOCAL AUTHORITIES.



films, and should follow a principle of respecting their artistic integrity by judging the films as a whole and not requesting cuts. As the Committee said: "Since the Criminal Code prohibits exhibitions which are contrary to public order or morals, any film which is pornographic or liable to disturb the public order should be referred to the Attorney General's department. The sole function of the board should be to identify the work for what it is. After that it is up to each citizen to decide whether or not he wants to 'consume' the product."

Although no legislation has been passed to implement the report, the board has since followed its principles and a Bill is now being prepared. But there has been no power to operate a classification scheme (which was not provided for in the 1925 law still in force) or to abolish censorship for adults. The board has been merged with the Government documentary film service (the Office du Film du Québec), the same man being president of both bodies; an extensive library of books and periodicals has been built up; the viewing theatre is used on four evenings a week by the Cinémathèque Canadienne; and the principle of passing or banning films as a whole without cuts has been fully adopted.

Unlike Quebec, New Zealand has long had a reputation for social innovation (one of its most recent was the Ombudsman). The Indecent Publications Tribunal grew out of a dissenting opinion in the New Zealand Court of Appeals when that court held the book *Lolita* to be obscene in 1961. Two years later an Act was passed setting up the Tribunal. This consists of a lawyer as chairman, and four other members at least two of whom must have special qualifications in the field of literature or education. The function of the Tribunal is to classify, after hearing argument and evidence, any books or sound recordings submitted to it by any court, by the Departments of Customs or of Justice, or, with leave, by anyone else (e.g. a book publisher or importer). It may find the work not indecent, or indecent to those of a certain age, or indecent except to certain groups (e.g. students of medicine or literature). The decision of the Tribunal is to be conclusive as to the character of the work (subject to certain rights of appeal), and any question as to its character which arises in any legal proceedings is to be referred to the Tribunal by the court involved. In reaching its decision, the Tribunal must take into account a wide range of criteria: the dominant effect of the work as a whole; its literary or artistic merit; its medical, legal, political or scientific importance; its likely clientele, including its price; the likelihood of it corrupting some readers and benefiting others; and whether it displays an honest purpose or whether its content is merely camouflage designed to render acceptable any indecent parts.

The effect of this Act is to remove the main evil of any censorship, the arbitrary nature of its discretion, and to retain the safeguards of judicial procedure—a proper definition of issues, the hearing of argument by skilled advocates, and the proper information of the Tribunal. The disadvantages of a court in this type of matter—the helplessness of a judge when faced with a problem which in essence does not involve truly legal issues—are avoided by mixing the adjudicatory skills of the chairman with the aesthetic, sociological and psychological skills of the other members. And decisions given since the Tribunal started work in March 1964 show that these advantages are real. There is a maturity of judgment and a relaxed authority which are not to be found in the decisions of ordinary courts; and the necessity to give a written statement of the reasons for a decision is a discipline which should be imposed more often on censors.

* * *

The main conclusions which emerge from a study of these developments are that:—

- (a) censorship as a means of controlling undesirable expression is inconsistent with the rule of law;
- (b) the task of a censorship board should be limited to classifying material for children and drawing the attention of the authorities to putative breaches of the law;

- (c) the non-legal elements in crimes of expression, especially obscenity, are so great that the ordinary courts of law are generally unsuited to assess the extremely specialist evidence involved;
- (d) nevertheless, judicial procedure provides certain essential safeguards.

But there remains the psychological fact that people will still be offended by films, plays and books and will try to have the offending works suppressed. This can at times build up into an almost irresistible pressure on Parliament. The solution adopted when this happened to the Press was to set up a Press Council as a sort of private ombudsman. It has no statutory powers but is able to investigate complaints, adjudicate upon them and issue rebukes to offending newspapers. Its effectiveness depends upon its publicity and prestige, its main function being to make investigations into apparent abuses or to bring justified popular displeasure to the notice of the Press, thus bridging a vital gap in communication.

These principles could be adapted to the reform of the present censorship network in Britain on the following lines:

1. Theatrical censorship should be abolished completely.
2. Film censorship for adults should be abolished completely.
3. Licensing authorities should be disentitled to include in their theatre and cinema licences conditions relating to the character of the entertainments given in them.
4. The BBFC should be converted into a British Board of Classification; its task should be to classify films for showing to children of various age groups, for which its staff of examiners would need to be properly qualified, and to provide a service of information and documentation to the film industry and public authorities. In view of the strong paternalistic tendency in welfare agencies dealing with the young, it might be desirable that the staff of the BBFC should not exceed the age of 35 years.
5. Complaints by local councillors, or made to them by members of the public, should be passed on to an Advisory Council on Freedom of Expression. This Council, of which the BBFC and the Press Council might be sections, would have as its function the receipt, investigation and adjudication of complaints relating to the content of any form of expression, including literature. It would have the power of rebuke but no power to enforce any sanctions. It would also have advisory functions.
6. The only sanctions against the content of films, plays, books, newspapers, etc. would be those provided by the criminal and civil law. In any such proceedings, the character of the incriminated work would be exclusively determined by a special Publications Tribunal, composed of suitably qualified members under a legal chairman. Matters might be sent to the Tribunal by any court, by certain Government departments (especially Customs, Home Office, Lord Chancellor and Attorney General), by the Advisory Council on Freedom of Expression (on behalf of the public or on its own account), and by anyone else with leave. The Tribunal would be concerned not only with indecent but also with blasphemous, racist and seditious works, with any work the intrinsic nature of which is in issue. Appeal would lie to the Court of Appeal against decisions of the Tribunal.

Some such system seems to be the only way in which the right of the artist, reformer or controversialist to free expression, the right of the public to free choice of information, stimulation and entertainment, and the general public interest in order and stability can be adequately reconciled in Britain at present.

Zoom out, slowly

John
Russell Taylor



HANDS . . . MORE HANDS . . . meals as a framework for life . . . graveyards as a framework for life . . . zoom out from peasant in a field . . . zoom out from sunset over the Ganges (is it?) . . . zoom out . . . does he ever zoom in? . . . caught him zooming in, but only once . . . have a good idea what he thinks of M. McCarthy, Muggeridge . . . wonder what they think of him . . .

And so on, for several pages, scrawled blindly on the backs of letters and unpaid bills; jottings from what I should grandly call a critic's notebook on the films of Kevin Billington. These amount at present to nine films finished, all between 40 minutes and an hour in length, one at roughcut stage and another on the stocks, plus some 200 snippets for use in the television programme *Tonight*. At which point, of course, the well-trained cineaste should say "Oh, television . . ." and turn away, feeling that he has been conned, for we are not, after all, talking about real films, but only the second-best, worthy no doubt but limited attempts to build mountains with molehill kit.

Such reservations, born of bitter experience, are understandable; but here they would be mistaken, for Kevin Billington comes about the nearest so far, certainly in this country, to making films which escape any narrow classification of this sort. They are television because they have been made for and shown on television; and they are good television. But they are films because they are made as all films are made, and because they carry effortlessly over on to the large screens for which they were never consciously intended. Witness the success of his *Twilight of Empire*, shown at last year's New York Festival in a bill with a Chris Marker; witness, if you ever get the chance, his brilliant, still unshown *Matador*, arguably the best film made about bullfighting, on any size of screen.

So much for apologia, if apologia is really needed. But the films are the important thing, and the extraordinary thing. Kevin Billington has been busy—nine films in three years—but busy to some effect: not only are the films themselves far

different from the now-you-see-it, now-you-forget-it average of even the best television, several of them bearing and even inviting repeated viewings, but the development between *A Sort of Paradise*, his first long film (1963), and his latest, *The English Cardinal*, is enormous and striking. Though perhaps what we should really be struck by is how very good, after all, *A Sort of Paradise* is. For as Billington explains, despite his apparently logical progression—university, eighteen months in Sweden broadcasting and discovering Bergman, radio, writing, studio directing, outside filming on a small scale, and then the full-scale 50-minute telefilm—there was really nothing logical about it.

* * *

As a producer for *Tonight* he shot but never edited, never even saw rushes; at best he might watch, and sometimes weep over, what other people back at the studio made of his material and his outlines—made of them sometimes so hurriedly that they did not even have time to run through more than half of the material he had shot. *A Sort of Paradise*, then, was a new experience, and a revelation; a first testing by the agony and occasional ecstasy of screening what one had shot, seeing when and how it worked, and whether and why it didn't, and sifting, shaping and manipulating it into a complete and finished work.

In the circumstances, as I say, it is surprising how good the film still looks, or much of it. It is a bit rambling, and a bit too long for what it has to say, whereas the later films are remarkably confident in their movement and certainly shaped. Moreover, it has that frequent bane of television documentary, the personality commentator, intruding himself: in this case, as in the later *These Humble Shores* and *A Few Castles in Spain*, the ubiquitous Alan Whicker. Whicker, I know, has a high reputation, particularly among television critics, but I can never quite see why; as a commentator on the world about

ABOVE: "A SOCIALIST CHILDHOOD". KEVIN BILLINGTON (ON TOMBSTONE) AND MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE IN HIGHGATE CEMETERY.



TWO SHOTS FROM "MATADOR".



him he seems to exemplify relentlessly, wilfully, the closed mind, the received idea, the unshakeable self-satisfaction of the man who can't be told anything. That, anyway, is what he projects, and it is a quality dangerous unless carefully used: he is best as a sort of calculated anti-body, automatically setting up resistance to what he is saying. For instance, when in *A Few Castles in Spain* he begins heavily tipping us the wink about just how seriously he thinks we should take the *richissime* Duchess of Alba's good works and her attempts to meet the people, we instantly begin to sympathise with and justify the poor lady in our own minds. Which is perhaps what Billington intended we should do—I do not know, and I would not dare ask.

A Sort of Paradise does raise though, quite apart from one's own opinion of Mr. Whicker and the effectiveness of his particular sort of expertise, the more general question of the usefulness of this sort of interlocutor figure in documentary. For a long time he was inescapable on television, and in short on-the-spot reporting stints he is probably the best, if not practically speaking the only way. But in a longer film of this sort he is a very mixed blessing. The film will, necessarily, have ceased to be in such a direct way *his* report; and often he will be there not because the programme is his idea or presents his point of view, but because someone has felt that his familiar, comforting figure will help to lead us painlessly into lands unknown, as Virgil led Dante into Hell.

So it is in *A Sort of Paradise*. Whicker is first glimpsed after about a quarter of an hour, in which the life of some Guatemalan Indians living on the shores of a mountain lake has been beautifully, economically evoked in pictures and few (but still rather too many) words. He is not doing anything, but just standing, solidly lounge-suited, watching some semi-pagan ceremony. Next we see him pausing in the native market to shrug nonchalantly (big joke) at the spectacle of an old man knitting. There follow a few interviews with outsiders—a doctor, a Swiss anthropologist, an American resident philanthropist with a fixation about latrines—which are fair enough. And then, final horror, we see a native family taking their child to be incantated and sacrificed over by a witch-doctor, with, believe it or not, Whicker still in attendance, stomping after them up the mountain in his lounge-suit and watching, with an air of suppressed disapproval tempered by humorous understanding of primitive quirks, while chickens are decapitated and the Mass amateurishly parodied.

I should say that this sequence in particular gives Billington the horrors now. But he remains surprisingly tolerant, or perhaps just tactful, about the whole convention: "It serves its turn, and it does allow all sorts of extraordinary material to reach the screen which never might have done so without the mediation of a personality commentator . . . But I feel I now want as far as possible to approach my own subjects direct, instead of obliquely, with a lot of explanation and interpreta-

tion of what it seems to me, if I have done my work properly, should not need explaining and interpreting."

So, perhaps, the Whicker type of film represents a closed chapter in Billington's career, and in *Matador*, their last collaboration, Whicker is not *seen* at all, but merely heard from time to time on the soundtrack. But it has been worth going in some detail into the form and its disadvantages, because it has led in Billington's work to a type of filming which seems very similar but on closer examination proves profoundly different. I am thinking especially of the two films Billington has made with Malcolm Muggeridge, *Twilight of Empire* and *The English Cardinal* (a third, *A Socialist Childhood*, is as I write at the rough-cut stage), and of *Mary McCarthy's Paris*.

* * *

In all these we seem to have the same interlocutor figure: Muggeridge shows us India or the life of Cardinal Heenan, Mary McCarthy shows us Paris, just as Whicker shows us Monte Carlo in *These Humble Shores* or explores the public and private life of the Duchess of Alba. But with this one vital difference: that Whicker is a television professional who is nothing but a television professional; for audiences he has no existence as a person, but only as television interpreter and guide to new worlds. Malcolm Muggeridge and Mary McCarthy, on the other hand, are people in their own right, with reputations beyond television; they are as interesting as what they are telling us about, and become for us willy-nilly examined as well as examiner.

The films, in fact, work like Chinese boxes. *Twilight of Empire* is on one level Malcolm Muggeridge's picture of the India he knew in the 1930s, and a confrontation of his memories with the sometimes bizarre actualities of India now. But it is also Billington's picture of India now, and Billington's examination of Muggeridge examining his own and India's past. In other words, we have two pictures superimposed, and the film takes on more complexities and ambiguities the longer one looks at it. Even more sharply do we get this in *Mary McCarthy's Paris*, perhaps because (I would guess) Billington is fundamentally less sympathetic towards Mary McCarthy than towards Muggeridge. What we get here, then, is certainly Mary McCarthy's view of Paris, imaged by Billington; but also Billington's view of Mary McCarthy, not always it seems to me a very flattering one—the dreadful "serious intellectual conversation" which opens and intersperses the film conveys such a gruesome picture of Mary McCarthy's social life that one wonders if it can be entirely unmalicious. And it cannot be chance that one longish to-camera talk by Miss McCarthy is led into by a gradual enlargement of our field of vision from a close-up of a very affectedly held cigarette, along the arm to take in the speaker's face, so that the very way it is shot emphasises the posiness of the pose, suggesting that she, the

American sophisticate holding her own in Europe, is striking a physical pose which perhaps reflects a mental pose beneath. And then again, to a certain extent the film embodies also Mary McCarthy's view of Billington's view of Paris: he first showed her Père Lachaise, the teenage boutiques, the broad high-jinks of a bourgeois wedding, and she then wrote the commentary to fit.

The English Cardinal carries the whole process a stage further. To begin with it is just a study of Cardinal Heenan as a man and a symbol; it seems quite straightforward and not at all complicated, which is all to the good. But then it is also (1) Muggeridge's view of Heenan, sometimes explicitly so, as when towards the end he gives on the soundtrack his personal assessment; (2) Billington's view of Heenan—necessarily so, in that the whole visual side, everything beyond the first verbal conception of a straight conversation-piece, is his; (3) Billington's view of Muggeridge in the context of the Cardinal's life; (4) Muggeridge's view of Billington—certain sections, like that depicting the Vatican council, are material shot by Billington and then commented on by Muggeridge; (5) Heenan's view of Muggeridge, and perhaps of Billington too—for the relation between observer and observed is not a simple one-way thing: television mirrors would do well to reflect, for they may give back more than the image they intend to return. Well, all that for a start, and then some; on examination an apparently simple, and certainly very readily comprehensible film turns into a sort of mirror-maze in which an infinitude of perspectives offer themselves temptingly, only to shift and vanish whenever we try to look straight down them.

Comparatively, *Matador* is a model of classical directness and sobriety. For the first time it is unequivocally Kevin Billington's view of his subject, face to face. The subject is the new, anti-traditional matador El Cordobes, and through him the whole world of the corrida. The film needs to be simple, direct in its style, because the attitudes it puts over are extremely complex. El Cordobes is at once a hero and a butcher, the fight itself is at once brave and cruel, the foreign tendency to identify with the bull is held in delicate balance with the Spaniard's unquestioning, unhesitating identification with the man, the matador. The brilliance and immediacy with which some of the actual fight material is captured dazzle, but the film keeps this subordinated to its theme, serving it but never by a flicker distracting from or betraying it. The virtuosity is sometimes extreme, but deployed with such discipline and discretion that few will be conscious of it, on first viewing at any rate.

* * *

But most of what I have been saying about these films brings us constantly, inescapably back to their intellectual construction. This, evidently, is complex and rigorous: Billington is clearly one of the most usefully intelligent film-makers at work in Britain today. But it would be doing him an injustice to suggest that this is the most striking, or even the most important, feature of his work. Where his gifts most significantly lie is not here, so much as in his remarkable capacity to work in visual terms. One would guess this just from meeting him: a voluble, expressive, unstoppable talker, he yet seems to feel the constant need of illustration: his hands dart tirelessly this way and that, carving shapes out of the air, scribbling imaginary diagrams on wall or table, always carrying the conversation forward beyond saying to showing. And it is the same in his films: he is for ever cutting down, cutting down on the words (even when they are from such an august pen as Mary McCarthy's), showing instead of saying; and his own constant criticism of his films is that they could so easily, and if he had his way would so easily, do with fewer words still.

He has, of course, been aided by some excellent cameramen, several, like Peter Bartlett on *Twilight of Empire* and Brian Tufano on *Matador*, doing their first major work for him. But the consistency of visual style in the films remains striking, especially considering this diversity of technicians.

The hands as they move tell you so much about the person they belong to: Cardinal Heenan's as he fidgets with his ring of office at the lunch table; Mary McCarthy's as she explores her ideas about Paris in the light of what the other dinner-guests

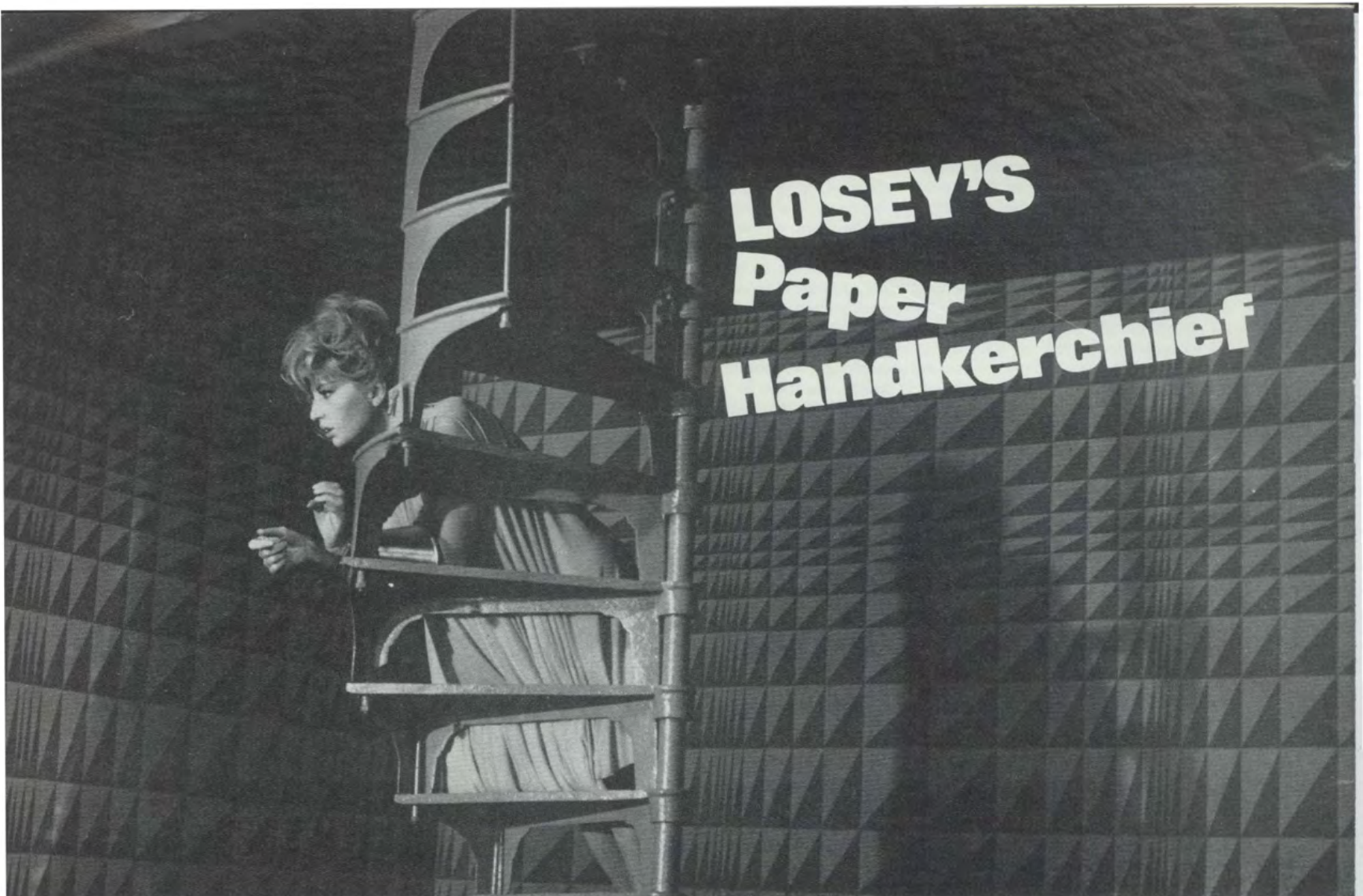


"MARY MCCARTHY'S PARIS"

say (meals, too, are recurrent) . . . The delight in passing from flesh to stone, from statues back to human beings, in placing the living among the monuments to the dead: these too tell us much about the world as he sees it, and tell us more clearly and vividly than any words could do. And those slow, compulsive zooms out, starting on a detail—a peasant sitting impassively in his field, a cigarette held with too much care in the hand of a world-famous writer—and taking us further away to see more and more of the physical context, manage at the same time to give us the whole intricate, elusive emotional context in relation to which the detail finds its significance. It is only proper that the critic should start by noting visual details in Kevin Billington's films, for no doubt when all the subtle and elaborate intellectual structures into which they are built have vanished from the mind, these are what will remain.

"A SOCIALIST CHILDHOOD": MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE REVISITS HIS PAST.





LOSEY'S Paper Handkerchief

Penelope Houston

IF OUR SOCIETY may be thought to have produced its ideal object, perhaps one need hardly look beyond the paper handkerchief. It achieves, effortlessly, that state of absolute impermanence to which so much else aspires. Some things arrive at the desired state only by accident: the cracks in the new motorways, the grinding death-rattle of the year-old machine, are not actually put there on purpose, whatever one may sometimes think. But already there are viable fantasies of the ideal car, which wouldn't have to be parked but could more or less be folded up and put away; or the ideal house, like an inflatable bubble which could be moved about according to the owner's whim. Durability belongs with materials which are lasting and hard to work. The dream of impermanence, the allure of the immediately disposable, strengthens its hold through plastic and polythene and neon.

But the paper handkerchief ideal brings its corollary, in the fantastic expense and ingenuity that goes into prettifying the impermanent. Use it; chuck it away; but don't deny it its artistic rights. Fashion photographs, posters, commercials, neon signs, comic strips: their attraction is that they don't last, that they can afford to look silly, or outrageous, or insanely extravagant, because no one is going to take them up on it in ten years time. They set anyone who wants to keep up with them a wicked pace. There is no worse fate than to be caught using 1965's slogan in 1966. But the illusion of contemporaneity, and the attraction of work which isn't committed to any proposition of permanence, outweighs the risks. Some surprising people are elbowing their way on to this roundabout, getting the painted wooden horse firmly between their knees and giving it a factitious crack of the whip. And the latest of them is Joe Losey.

In Losey's career *Modesty Blaise* is something of a freak: a sport, in both senses of the word. It isn't a film one would

have expected him to make, which may be why he has done it. But it is a film someone of his calibre and seriousness was almost bound to make, from the moment when the Bond formula got into public domain. At around the time of *Goldfinger* one toyed with the idea of what might happen if a director of more independent mind, a more distinctive 'signature', to use Losey's favourite word, than Guy Hamilton or Terence Young, were to take it on. Bond adds up to action, brand name goods, and the chance for some witty decor on the side. *Modesty Blaise* encourages the action to drown in the decor. From its op art main title credit (so reminiscent of the dust-jacket of Tom Wolfe's book that for one apprehensive instant one wondered if that was what Losey had been filming) to its shoulder-shrugging finale, it is dedicated to a blinding chic. Will anyone, will even Joe Losey himself, be able to look at that credit title in a year or two without wincing?

The film originates, naturally, with the *Evening Standard* strip cartoon, and with a rather thuggish novel adapted from the strip. Rather less sure of his ground here than a Godard or a Lester, Losey throws in a line of dialogue to remind us what we are watching. But then Losey himself is not a man who can easily be envisaged reading the strip cartoons for his own amusement. Godard slips in and out of the idiom (the fight in the filling station in *Pierrot le Fou*, for instance) with the freewheeling ease of someone brought up on Dick Tracy. Losey at such points becomes altogether more cerebral. One senses that he knows theoretically all about what makes the strips fashionable, and what significance this or that sociologist has found in them. But not that he simply enjoys them.

Enjoyment isn't essential, though it might have helped. The plot here is actually a little sturdier, and distinctly more coherent, than most of the Bond-Flint-Helm cycle. Modesty, temporarily retired adventuress, is signed up by the British

government (Harry Andrews, jaw jutting like a floodlit cliff face) to deliver a consignment of diamonds to a friendly sheikh on whom Britain relies for an oil concession. But Modesty and her cockney aide Willie Garvin (the resourceful Terence Stamp) are only decoys, intended to trick master criminal Gabriel (Dirk Bogarde) into taking his eye off the real target. Modesty catches on, ditches the British, goes after the diamonds herself, visits Gabriel in his lair . . . And so, read on.

* * *

Not a great story, but at least in its simple way a story. It seems partly with the idea of demonstrating the impermanence of the enterprise that Losey throws so much of it away, obscuring quite elementary action to a point where it becomes bafflingly abstruse. Where the film does briefly approximate to the snip-snap technique of the strips (the Amsterdam canal boat sequence, for instance, or the wayward finale, with the sheikh waving on his troops from every point of the compass), one is inevitably reminded that this isn't Losey's true method. The Dick Lester bravura doesn't come naturally. But the really interesting thing is to watch the unnerving effect of material that doesn't fully engage him on a director of Losey's intelligence. The beautiful clarity of *The Servant*, baroque style harnessed to plot and logic, breaks down into a technique which works like a series of defence mechanisms against the sense. Sophisticated directors (see also *The Moving Target*) may play childish games, but they want to be sure we know that they know how childish the games are. A truer sophistication, it seems to me, is the Hitchcock style, where the jokes always run with the plot and involvement is guaranteed.

Here, involvement fails at moments when it's needed. You can't consistently play at undercutting excitement and then expect an audience to switch off disbelief and take a serious interest in a chase round an island or a murder in a fun-fair. And for part of this failure, the miscasting of Monica Vitti is certainly responsible. Cowering in Gabriel's op art dungeon (a neat touch, converting wallpaper into an instrument of torture) she looks altogether too like the heroine of *The Red Desert* trying to decide what colour to paint her shop. Dashing adventuresses ought never to let their surroundings get so much on top of them. When it comes to action, it is playfully evident that Monica can't cope. Rashly, she essays a bit of fast work with a bow and arrow. The victim is duly impaled; but not by Monica's arrow, which would need radar guiding to get back on target.

Still, such things can be confectioned. And it is what the film has chosen to confection, and how it replaces its jettisoned plot, that makes *Modesty Blaise* so much a movie for the moment. It sparkles with prettiness, fondant colours, ice-cream elegance, like an op art junk shop stuffed with Sixties bric-à-brac. Dirk Bogarde trips around his Mediterranean fortress in sweaters that look as though they were showing off some new dry cleaning process, protected from the sun by a tidy parasol and wearing the slit-eyed look in sun-glasses. When Gabriel and Modesty meet in confrontation aboard his yacht, one's eye is riveted by the goblet from which she is drinking orange juice and champagne, and by his dark blue pottery beer mug. Modesty and Garvin career about the slopes of Etna in a red Ferrari, while she licks at an ice-cream cone as big as the Ritz. When the drive turns into an ambush, and a trick packet of cigarettes is brought into play to let off a smoke bomb, the pink and yellow fumes engagingly echo the ice-cream colours. With all these new, clean, brilliant objects around, the people and whatever emotions they are trying to express really become rather a distraction.

Making no attempt to rival Ken Adam, who designs hideouts for power-maniacs in a prim geometry of straight lines, Richard Macdonald has gone for non-functional extravagance. Modesty's bedside computer sends punch cards flying in all directions; an Arab sheikh parks a mini-car in a corridor at the Ritz; Gabriel has a rocket which looks too like a child's toy to be fully operational. And to match these grotesqueries, the main characters wear wigs as lesser people might wear hats. Out of these multiple quick-change acts comes one splendid monstrosity, when Modesty claws at Garvin's back, rips it in

what seems an excess of tigerishness—and peels away a whole layer of false skin lined with a neat little set of tools and gadgets. Not that Losey, when it comes to the point, is an adept gadget man. The trick of an exploding house, disintegrating in placid long shot at a touch on the doorbell, is very beguiling. But the finicky business of assembling a serviceable armoury from a collection of metal parts doesn't interest him and he ignores the first rule of successful gadgetry, which is that the audience should see the point of what is being done.

Bizarre characters take over where prettiness leaves off. Dirk Bogarde is perhaps too essentially serious an actor to extract everything possible from Gabriel, the criminal fantasist with a mother complex. The scene in which he orders his rocket to shoot down an R.A.F. plane, alternating tremolos of regret for the casualties with alarming exultation, ought to be either funnier or more abrasive, less or more true to some kind of life. By playing Mrs. Fothergill, his outrageous executioner, with a slightly contemptuous amusement, Rosella Falk the more effectively nails down a comic strip villainess out of a psychiatrist's textbook. And Bogarde is at his most adroit when nervously instructing Mrs. Fothergill to sip, not gulp, her disgraceful pleasures.

Yet this unbelievable master criminal, with his tame friar and penny-pinching Scottish accountant (a character, incidentally, who seems more suited to the project in its earlier, or St. Trinian's phase, before it passed from Launder and Gilliat to Losey), is simply old Doctor No tricked up to the minute. Play with it as the film may, work it against the grain, the formula in the end proves stronger than any subversive tactics the director or screenwriter can think up. Evan Jones' script has some dry and engaging jokes, particularly the moment when Modesty, asked what she did on the afternoon she was supposed to go to Balenciaga, answers, in the tone of one giving away the plans to the fortress, that she went to Christian Dior instead; and there are occasional flashing visual witticisms which aren't entirely dependent on affectations in the decor.

* * *

There would seem to be two good reasons for making a film like *Modesty Blaise*. The first is that the film-makers are amusing themselves: but exuberance, geniality—in one cruel word, youth—are what this movie rather conspicuously lacks. The second is that by taking off the brakes of plausibility, logic, moral concern, the formula opens a door stylistically, gets a director away from convention into an environment where anything goes. It seldom seems to work out quite that way. Just because anything goes in plot and character, the style is liable to be much less adventurous and alive than when the problem is not how to cover up a gimcrack structure but how to fine down a substantial one.

For Losey, with his instinct for modern baroque, there is always some temptation to pile it on. It spoiled the last third of *The Servant*, when this beautifully balanced film went for showiness instead of subtlety. It can't be said to spoil *Modesty Blaise*, because here excess is all, and the mood is that sort of interior decorator's sophistication which has allowed itself to lose sight of any relationship between purpose and effect. At his Cannes press conference, Losey seemed to want to be sure we all realised that there was more to his *Modesty* than met the eye. But what more? And for that matter, in this inescapably flimsy context, why more?

Comic strips; op art; fashion photographs; gadgets; sports cars; poster arrivals at enchanted landfalls. *Pierrot le Fou*, as well as *Modesty Blaise*, has them all. And one reason why Godard is so modern an artist is that he takes the whole disposable civilisation for granted, works from inside its values and sorts them out on his own terms. A director of an older generation is simply unequipped to do this; and *Modesty Blaise* gives one an unexpected insight into just what the gap between the generations can look like. For the defence of middle-age is to take up the fashion, but to protect itself through a whole series of barricades against any risk of genuine involvement. Entertainment on these terms becomes an 'in' game for 'in' people: a game without risks; cricket with a soft ball, and with all the field in op art sweaters.

FILM REVIEWS

MORGAN, A SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT

WHAT IS FINALLY SO remarkable about Karel Reisz's film *Morgan* (BLC/British Lion) is its eloquence about pain. There can be few British films where the sense of loss, emotional shipwreck, and the agony of separation come across so sharply, devoid of rhetoric, free of glibness. In large part this is because it is rooted in two extraordinary performances. David Warner makes Morgan into a gawky suffering animal, thrusting that strange elongated muzzle of his into whirlwinds of misfortune, radiating a mute self-absorption which seems the very essence of unhappiness. Vanessa Redgrave as Leonie has an aching beauty, an innate facial serenity which can collapse into despair from one moment to the next. It is the delicate, doomed fluctuations of these two creatures which ultimately enable the film to earn its true tragic tone.

Which is not to say that it doesn't waver before it gets there. The first third of the film, an elliptically edited presentation of Morgan's attempts to reassert rights to Leonie on the very day of her decree nisi, is restless and unsure in tone. Morgan falling into the bath, comic builders straight out of a *Carry On* film, even some of Morgan's outrageous japes—these seem often to lack the true desperation of the situation. "Where has gentleness got me? Violence has a kind of dignity in a loving man," says Morgan. And we take the point that, temperamentally incapable of real violence, his only weapon in this crisis is defiant outrage: hammers and sickles on dogs and carpets, skeletons under the eiderdown. But there is something in the treatment of these provocative acts which is fatally close to Ealing comedy—or bad Dick Lester. It is the short takes and emphatic gagging which make for a feeling of slickness: perhaps a sustained exploratory man/woman sequence (as often happens around the middle of a Godard film) would have drawn us into the relationship without nudging us so much.

For David Mercer's screenplay is a superbly balanced double achievement: the disintegrating couple are explored and understood, and at the same time they become an image of other kinds of disinte-

gration: of politics, class, perception itself. But the brute painful fact of these two struggling people never becomes just an image. Morgan's fantasy life is scrupulously meaningful: he yearns for the simplicity and directness of tree-swinging apes, galloping giraffes, hovering birds. At the beginning of the film, this fantasy does indeed, as Morgan claims, constitute a case for life, for birth; and it links with the specifically political allegory in which Morgan equals Trotsky, the defeated murdered visionary, while Leonie's art-dealer lover equals Stalin, the iron man who can control reality. On both levels, this early animal imagery represents a hardly deniable (and often startlingly beautiful) appeal for the possibility of a gentle victory. The gorilla here is a force of simple good.

The turning-point comes after Morgan's stint in jail for disobeying the court injunction by kidnapping Leonie. The machinery of society has intervened: it tips Morgan over into madness. The gorilla becomes King Kong, avenging monster. The eloquent close-up of Morgan's tired eyes through the gorilla mask is powerful cinema. In a single image it shows us the character trying to assume an impossible invulnerability by adopting a mask. He can't sustain the pressures tearing within him and they erupt in the break-up of Leonie's wedding, and in the unbearable straitjacket/firing-squad hallucination at the end, hard-faced partisans finishing off the guilty class traitor.

The emotional and visual logic of this development is deft and complex. It clearly lays out the subterranean motive for Morgan's crisis: the foursquare British communism of his parents. "We brought you up to respect Marx, Lenin, Harry Pollitt," says his mother, played with truthful eccentricity by Irene Handl. Like the rest of us, Morgan can hardly live by these simple verities: hence he is hung-up. "You want to watch it," says the policeman. "Yes, but where is it?" asks Morgan hopelessly. All he has left is the quality of his loving. It is a position shared emotionally by many classless left-wing people in Britain today. Introverted, fantasy-blown, by turns utopian and

fatalistic, it probably is a spiritual condition that constitutes a suitable case for treatment. But by whom? Revolutionaries? A loving woman? The law? Psychiatry?

The film shows an extreme, even catastrophic case of the disease. The story-line demonstrates that the asylum can be the only terminus for this man. But running against this inexorable social process is a counter-argument, which we glimpse in Leonie's instinctive affection for Morgan's lunging embraces, in the fact that he has so much more dignity than the slick conformist which Robert Stephens rightly makes of the art-dealer. This counter-argument claims that the gentle and the open and the assailable *should* have a right to inherit the earth, though all the chips in the world are stacked against them. The film's final sequence, a Pyrrhic victory in the asylum when Leonie tells Morgan that her child is his, brings this conflict of social and instinctive forces to a troubling and ambiguous conclusion.

In so far as it taps a deep rooted psychic dilemma of our society, I think *Morgan* can be compared with a landmark of ten years ago, *Look Back in Anger*. In both, there is a crisis of loving; in both, the woman in the case crystallises all the unresolved uncertainties and impotence of the man; in both, sexual and social problems are interlocked. But *Morgan* represents a development: now that we live under Wilsonism, the man's search for "good brave causes" has become a deeper, less extrovert, more guilt-ridden acceptance of the difficulties of ever making socialism. The sexual turbulence in *Morgan* has reached the crisis point of divorce. The fantasy, instead of being a mutual bears-and-squirrels refuge, has become the cage and lifeline of one partner only. And madness is the only way of living this situation. The development which *Morgan* represents is in a sombre and more desperate direction.

Karel Reisz's film at its best succeeds in communicating this poignant desperation. The best sequences are the least emphatic: that extraordinary afternoon visit to Marx's grave which ends with Morgan piggybacking his mum off among the gravestones, shouting "Up the Revolution!" The Welsh lake sequence, its desolate stillness only marred by the joky speeded-up bed-swapping routine. The discreet long shot which shows us Morgan's first assumption of the gorilla skin. These for me define the film's truth. Its recurring lapses into Knackabout seem more of a nervous tic. But take it for all in all, it's a film which makes a troubling statement hauntingly.

MICHAEL KUSTOW

"MORGAN". DAVID WARNER,
VANESSA REDGRAVE.



LE MANI SULLA CITTA

LE MANI SULLA CITTA (Contemporary) opens with an aerial shot of what might be any city, not necessarily even Italian, undergoing a disorganised building boom. The city is in fact Naples, though this is never stated, and it takes a fairly sharp and knowledgeable eye to detect the occasional glimpse of a known landmark or the registration plates on the cars. Many of the events described are furthermore, despite Rosi's disclaimer, events which took place in Naples in the years 1960 and 1961, and in particular what is commonly known in Naples as the affair of the "Magnificent Seven."

In the film the Italian political spectrum is divided into three—the Right, who hold a majority on the Council; the Centre, a minority in the city but the majority in the

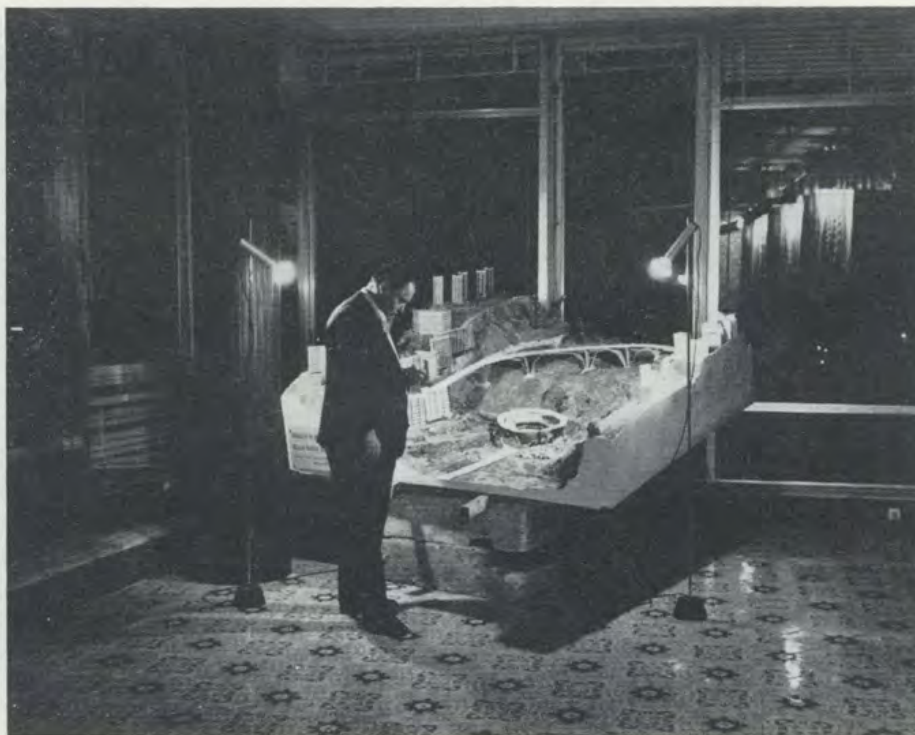
national government; and the Left. This fairly accurately reflects the situation in Naples up to 1961, though it grossly oversimplifies the situation nationally. No distinction is made between the various left-wing groups (Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats), nor is it made clear to the uninitiated that only in Naples, and for special reasons, not gone into in the film, has a right-wing (Monarchist) group ever been powerful enough to force the Christian Democrats into a minority position in the centre of the spectrum. Nor, finally, is there any reference to what elsewhere in Italy, in the Sixties, has been the major political issue, the alliance of the Centre and the moderate Left.

These political considerations are not irrelevant to appreciation of the film. It is a political film, about a particular political situation, and one of the criteria for assessing it must be its truth to that situation, and its political relevance. On the criterion of relevance it fails, possibly deliberately. Indeed one suspects that Rosi's choice of an atypical situation was calculated to avoid committing himself to any precise position on contemporary issues. There is no doubt that he is on the Left. But, like the left-wing councillor De Vita in the film, he does not take up any sectarian ideological or political stance.

Le Mani sulla Città is therefore self-contained. As a report about past events, though it pretends to be fictional, it is accurate almost to the point of libel. Its contemporary relevance, however, is purely generic. Critics with a knowledge of Italian politics, and educated audiences in Italy, can see in it a denunciation of caucuses and corruption in a particular phase of Italian political life. For most people, however, its historical accuracy is mainly a guarantee of authenticity. If things happened that way, it is impossible to maintain blandly that "things like that just do not happen."

Of course It Happened in Naples: and Naples to many people is comic opera, spaghetti and Sophia Loren in her least convincing roles. But Rosi's Naples is not the Naples of sentimental moviegoers or even of Stendhal. Rosi has effectively eliminated most of the features of the Neapolitan scene which make it so unlike other European cities—its picturesque, its Bourbon heritage, its low level of industrial development—so that the story he recounts is one which could be true equally in Milan or Marseilles, Boston or Bradford. Seen in this light, *Le Mani sulla Città* is a film about political power and the relationship between private ambition and public advantage; and what it seeks to show is how intricate, in a contemporary political situation, this relationship has become.

Rosi's narrative technique, as in *Salvatore Giuliano*, is elliptical. At the start of the film a house wall on the edge of a construction site collapses. Casualties are not enumerated. Concentration is focused on a small boy who is injured, on the terror spreading along the street, on the fact that the site manager has scarpered. The site manager, as it happens, is the son of the entrepreneur and city councillor Eduardo Nottola, for whom this particular site represents only a fraction of his investments and ambitions. Nottola's long-term plan, hinted at in the opening pre-credit sequence, is to get hold of unscheduled land, and then use his position on the council to get it scheduled for building development. This ambition he eventually achieves, but the accident brings into play a set of forces which he cannot so easily control, and for a



ROD STEIGER IN "LE MANI SULLA CITTA'".

moment it looks as if all his plans are going to be brought to nothing.

The forces brought into play against Nottola are the inchoate forces of popular outcry, and their organised political expression is the left political parties, led by De Vita. Compared with the dynamic and flamboyant Nottola, played by an unexpectedly Italianate Rod Steiger, De Vita, played by a real-life Italian Communist trade-unionist, Carlo Fermariello, seems rather colourless. But De Vita is the only character in the film who is shown as having any popular following, and this differentiates him qualitatively not only from Nottola, who buys support at election times through a network of *capi-elettori*, but also from the sympathetic but ineffective left-of-centre doctor whose humanitarian feelings are aroused by the plight of the injured boy. De Vita's popular following, however, and the political support of the anti-corruption left fraction of the Centre, are insufficient to pierce the political labyrinth through which Nottola roams like a minotaur.

Given its terms of reference, the enquiry commission set up after the accident can find out nothing substantial. Meanwhile, when new elections come round, Nottola, anticipating and aggravating a right-wing débâcle, switches his allegiance to the Centre. Party interests come first. The Right is forced to accept Nottola's defection, and to seal its acceptance with a symbolic embrace. Once Nottola has been accepted by the Centre leadership, the doctor and his friends are unable or afraid to split the party on the issue. Nottola is appointed building commissioner. His speculation on unscheduled land becomes gilt-edged security.

The question of large-scale speculation is little more than a framework. The heart of the film lies in the clash of personalities and values between the protagonists, set off by the accident. Nottola, De Vita, the doctor and the political bosses are all different types of political animal. To a certain extent their personal characters and motives (particularly the doctor's) get lost in the political machinations in which they are forcibly

involved. But their political characters come over with abundant clarity. Each of these men is defined by the action he undertakes: the doctor by a struggle against suffering, inhumanity and corruption, De Vita by the fight for the interests of the working-class and the poor, Nottola by the amoral dynamism of a natural entrepreneur. The confrontation on the building site between Nottola and De Vita is personal. But it is also a clash of principles, purer in form than the rowdy demagogic outbursts in the council chamber. On the site the issue becomes concrete. Nottola builds houses with bathrooms. But for whom? Not, De Vita retorts, for the poor who are being dispossessed from their slums to allow the building of new blocks. Their conditions remain the same, briefly glimpsed in the film in a few shots of the *basifondi* where they live. But they are not insisted on. It is the articulate conflict between the representative of the oppressed and the type figure of oppression that attracts Rosi's attention. Life is reduced to a single dimension, the political, and, for the purposes of the drama, politics is taken to subsume the rest.

By comparison with neo-realism, with its ever-present concern with wider aspects of the social condition of man, this may seem an impoverishment. But paradoxically the effect is that *Le Mani sulla Città* is realistic, and profound, in a way that the self-styled neo-realists were not. The neo-realist heroes were all political innocents. However particular the description of the details of their lives, they remain stereotypes of suffering humanity. They are imposed on by the world, and their pathos lies in their inability to understand what it is that imposes on them.

Rosi's films turn a critical eye on to the mechanism responsible. They show men acting out particular articulate roles. The concern for the lower, inarticulate strata remains, and Rosi does not claim for the mechanism a transparency which it does not possess. Something always remains unexplained. But by and large (and *Moment of Truth*, which I have not seen, may be an



"CUL-DE-SAC": FRANCOISE DORLEAC, DONALD PLEASANCE, LIONEL STANDER.

exception) Rosi's films aim above all to analyse and explain. *Le Mani sulla Città* is, in terms of this intention, the most perfect of them, more perfect than *Salvatore Giuliano*, in which so much remained obscure and even mysterious. But it is, possibly for that reason, a colder film than *Salvatore Giuliano* or *La Sfida*—or than the warm-hearted but naive successors of the neo-realist tradition.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

CUL-DE-SAC

AH! PINTER' one cries, sniffing like a Bisto Kid at the heady aroma of *Cul-de-Sac* (Compton-Cameo). Then one remembers the odd, elliptical conversations of *Knife in the Water*, and wonders if Polanski was even then the Pinter of Poland. An unanswerable question, really, even if one knows Polish, as Pinter's English is so distinctive that it sounds like something else as soon as it is translated. Whatever the answer, the fact remains that Polanski's command of the English language has matured rapidly since the hesitations of *Repulsion*, and the idiotic clichés of polite conversation, observed with hilarious exactness, form a permanent, twittering background to *Cul-de-Sac*.

For the rest, this is very much Polanski as we have come to know him: ghoulish black comedy; the pain of solitude; pride; a touch of masochism; and above all, people and objects at odds with a landscape (like the bandaged men against the snow in *Mammals*, the two men and a wardrobe in *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, the squabbling trio locked together by a boat in *Knife in the Water*). In this case, the film opens with a long road stretching endlessly away, empty wastes of sand to either side, in the distance a single car crawling slowly forward. The car turns out to be being pushed by a gangster called Dickie (Lionel Stander), whose colleague Albie (Jack MacGowran) sits mortally wounded at the wheel. The road soon proves to be a causeway which floods over at high tide, leaving Albie marooned in mid-ocean, crossly shouting "I've got a problem here" to the empty spaces.

Meanwhile, on a voyage of exploration, Dickie discovers a medieval castle, looming in Gothic isolation over the sand dunes and inhabited by a bald, beady little rabbit of a man and his sexy French wife (Donald Pleasence and Françoise Dorléac), whom he holds at gunpoint while waiting for rescue. One might almost say "while waiting for Godot". The Beckett reference is explicit—Katelbach, the gang-leader to whom Dickie appeals for help, never actually turns up, and at one point Albie in his delirium pointedly cries "He doesn't love us any more"—but seems to me a little out of place in a film whose main preoccupation is a reenactment in different terms of the *Knife in the Water* triangle.

The situation is set out with superb economy: the arrival of the car; the desolate courtyard overrun with chickens; the husband struggling ineffectually with a recalcitrant kite and entertaining the neighbours while his wife makes love with the neighbours' son on a shrimping expedition ("Five shrimps," says Pleasence later in hungry disgust, "is that all you've caught?"). Then a bizarre sequence of bedtime games which ends with the husband, disturbed by Dickie's nocturnal prowling, venturing downstairs in a frilly nightgown and heavily mascaraed eyes for a humiliating meeting from which his dignity never quite recovers.

Humiliation is at the centre of his subsequent troubles as he makes his pathetic attempts to assert himself against the intruder. Perfectly aware that if it comes to the push his wife has no use for him, and that he stands little chance in any sort of showdown with the gangster, he still allows himself to be goaded by their common disdain into making a futile stand which ends in chaos. He kills the gangster (accidentally), watches helplessly as his wife runs off in panic with the nearest available male (a passing acquaintance), and is left alone to squat on a rock in the middle of the flooded causeway, crying for his dead first wife.

The edgy relationship of this weird trio is beautifully constructed as a vicious circle constantly on the verge of breaking into disaster: the wife's alternate flirting with and abuse of the gangster, received by him with hostile indifference, provokes the husband

into renewed efforts at self-assertion; and these efforts, snappishly yapping like a Pekinese trying to worry a supercilious Great Dane, in turn arouse the gangster to real menace. Then the circle suddenly seems to find an issue in the extraordinary sequence on the beach in the half-light before dawn (the whole film is brilliantly shot by Gilbert Taylor, capturing the precise texture of light at different times of day), where under the influence of a bottle of home-made vodka the two men discover an uneasy alliance born of their mutual hatred of the female trouble-maker. While she scampers off to the sea for a bathe, Dickie listens with sullen understanding, muttering "They're all whores," as the husband grovels hysterically on the beach, his cries of love ("She's just a girl, she's just a naughty child . . . I don't regret anything") sounding exactly like a curse. But it is only a temporary alliance, born of unease and tension, and is broken when the sun rises on a new day and new hope of the arrival of Katelbach.

Up to this point the plot has gripped like a lobster claw; but then a long hiatus, during which the arrival of unexpected guests forces a suspension of hostilities, allows the tension to drop before it picks up again with the final explosion of violence. One feels here that the film is growing hesitant, sidling crabwise before getting on target again. But for all that it is basically extraneous to the action, one would not willingly surrender this sequence—perhaps the funniest in the film—which has Dickie posing as the family retainer ("He's wearing a Christian Dior tie," someone remarks reprovingly), a ghostly small boy with a lust to kill chickens busily scrabbling in Albie's newly-dug grave, and a slow crumbling of the social niceties which ends in mutual abuse, a howl of "That Froggie bitch pulled my ear off" from the awful child, and a hurried leave-taking all round.

The acting, not easy in this sort of *outré* comedy of manners, is so uniformly good that it seems invidious to single out any of the four leading players. All the same, Donald Pleasence's performance is an astonishing tour de force: just to watch him juggle a couple of eggs with uneasy nonchalance, only to drop one and crush the

other, is to watch a complete four-act tragic-comedy about a man betrayed by his body. As for the wonderfully photogenic location Polanski has found on Northumberland's Holy Island—why don't British film-makers have strokes of genius like that?

TOM MILNE

THE MOVING TARGET

IN THE LISTLESS SUNLIGHT of a still California afternoon, tough, disenchanted private eye Lew Harper arrives at the luxurious, unwelcoming home of his latest client, a rich and malicious invalid whose husband has vanished. Probably, she tells him, it is only another woman—in which case she wants full details. But who knows, with a bit of luck he might even be dead...

Sounds nostalgic? Especially considering that what we are dealing with is not something cooked up by Warners for Humphrey Bogart circa 1946, but *The Moving Target*, ex *Harper*, cooked up by Warners in 1966 as a rather unlikely vehicle for Paul Newman. Unlikely because the last thing expected at the moment is such an unashamed harking-back to the good old days when Raymond Chandler, of all people, was being castigated for the depravity of his writings and their tendency to corrupt, while the private detective had to deal with normally shady humans instead of super-spies, and deal with them using no gadget more complex than a .38 automatic.

Obviously *The Moving Target* is a deliberate, self-conscious harking-back, introducing surely something new to the screen, which however old-fashioned it may be in fact always tries to convince us that it is as fresh as tomorrow and has no yesterday; the knowing exploitation of audience nostalgia for a sort of film long gone. Not only is William Goldman's script based on a book written by Chandler's most distinguished follower, Ross MacDonal, back in Chandler's own heyday, but in detail it seems to go out of its way to suggest a pot-pourri of the best-remembered scenes from the great Chandler-Hammett films.

The opening is unmistakably *The Big Sleep* or *The High Window*. The scene in which Harper, following a tenuous lead, gets Fay Estabrook, a baggy, ageing, obliging blonde, drunk in order to search her home, takes us straight back to the equivalent scene between Dick Powell and Esther Howard in *Farewell, My Lovely*. The scene in which Harper tries to kid his wife over the phone that he is a faintly pansified dance instructor offering her free lessons has evident overtones of Humphrey Bogart with Dorothy Malone in the bookshop. As for the end, with the old problem of whether the self-styled cynical private eye can avoid staying true to his code, even if it means turning in his best friend or the woman he loves: take your pick from any of a dozen films, starting with *The Maltese Falcon*.

But let us look a little closer at that ending. In *The Maltese Falcon* there is a real problem: we are left in no doubt that Mary Astor has been a very naughty lady indeed, and must be brought to book by any private eye who takes his job seriously. Moreover, we know perfectly well that Bogart has his own strict code of behaviour, and will have to follow things through to their logical conclusion at whatever cost to his private feelings. In *The Moving Target* it is not so simple—or so complex, depending which way you look at it. Admittedly Harper's best

friend, the nervous lawyer Albert Graves, did kill old man Sampson, for no reason which is very clear even to himself. And admittedly Harper ought to turn him in. But then we have never met Sampson, so the crime is not very real to us. Moreover, everyone in sight is agreed that it is a good thing Sampson is dead, while the killer is obviously no real villain, but just rather silly and ineffectual. And Harper himself is so much more the cynical opportunist than Marlowe even affected to be (here at least he is a post-Bond hero) that we cannot imagine he will suddenly develop Marlovian scruples. Nevertheless he does, and we get the obligatory scene in which Harper announces his intention of telling all, deliberately gives Graves the chance to shoot him in the back, and Graves finds that he can't. But, final twist, neither apparently can Harper go through with his duty. There is deadlock, then as Harper shrugs it off with an "Aw, hell" the frame freezes, the story is over.

This sequence is very indicative of the whole film's approach. It seems that William Goldman and Jack Smight, who directed, want to have their cake and eat it: to get all the excitement and audience involvement of *The Maltese Falcon* or *The Big Sleep*, but at the same time dissociate themselves from the ways and means by tipping us the wink that they don't take it all seriously. But of course you have to choose—or at least at this level of achievement you do. Either you can work within the conventions chosen, or you can send them up. You cannot, or anyway Messrs. Smight and Goldman cannot, do both simultaneously without fatally undercutting your effects. Pastiche constantly edges into parody, and the result is more likely to be limp anticlimax than salutary shock.

Even the nostalgic cast list—Lauren Bacall as society bitch, Shelley Winters as drunken ex-starlet, Janet Leigh as Harper's entirely dispensable wife, Julie Harris as a junky nightclub entertainer, Robert Wagner as a shifty air pilot—cannot altogether cover up the basic indecision of the film's makers about what they are trying to do. Or, perhaps, whom they are doing it for. Middle-

aged film fans who see Bond as an upstart? Kids who have seen Bogey on the box and think a devotion to Marlowe is almost as camp as a taste for Batman? Paul Newman fans so besotted that they don't care what he's in? It's anybody's guess. If by some chance the answer should turn out to be all three, and the film a vast success in consequence, it will be interesting to see how the cycle develops.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

LILITH

INGMAR BERGMAN ONCE SAID that he made each of his films as though it were his last. *Lilith* (BLC/Columbia) was Robert Rossen's last film before his death, and much of it (he was already ill when he made it) looks as though he knew it would be his last. *Lilith* is a schizophrenic, beautiful, innocent, fragile. She lives in her private world, a self-creation which has its own language and history, where love is limitless, offered openly and totally to anyone and everyone. Into this world, set in an expansive mansion which serves as a private mental institution for rich patients, steps Vincent Bruce, himself an innocent, but hardened by his war experience and moved by a vague determination to alleviate suffering. He is entranced by Lilith, gradually drawn into her world, and finally compelled to discover that his impulsive need for her has made him unable to distinguish between the morality of the normal people outside and the awful simplicity of Lilith's private existence.

Rossen wrote his own screenplay, adapted from J. R. Salamanca's novel, and the first half of the film beautifully captures the haunting, elusive world that Lilith has created round herself. Dialogue is used sparsely, ambivalently. Vincent walks with Lilith through the rich, formal gardens of the institution with their rolling lawns and elaborate fountains, looking into Lilith's world as an outsider, as the therapist. But the peace of these surroundings is abruptly,

"THE MOVING TARGET": STROTHER MARTIN, JULIE HARRIS, SHELLEY WINTERS, ROBERT WEBBER.



if momentarily, disturbed by the strange behaviour of its inmates. Here the film is at its best, and Rossen's direction, enhanced by Eugen Shuftan's muted photography, effectively builds up the growing ambiguity of the outsider's attitude.

Slowly, inexorably, Vincent is mesmerised by Lilith, his attraction exaggerated into a need to possess. Like the pool-shark of *The Hustler*, Vincent is drawn by an intangible force which paralyses him into a destructive, tragic figure. As his lyrical excursions with her into the Maryland countryside—a fair where he rides as her champion in a jousting tournament, a picnic on the banks of the Potomac—seem to be bringing Lilith closer to reality, so Vincent is drawn into a vertigo of possessiveness, jealous of her liking for a Lesbian patient, her whispering to small boys, frightened by the completeness of her submission to him. Rossen's method here is exactly right, imperceptibly preparing us for the inevitability of Vincent's fall, Lilith's weirdly beautiful, twilight world counterpointed by her need to "leave the mark of her desire on every living creature."

But though Jean Seberg's portrayal of Lilith is intelligent and convincing, there is in the end something missing from the film. Vincent is introspective and faltering from the beginning, and Warren Beatty seems ill at ease, understandably perhaps, with a script which requires him to stutter out his words as he stares into the distance. And though Rossen has prepared us for the final tragedy, when Vincent drives Stephen, a fellow patient in love with Lilith, to suicide, when the moment comes it appears just a little too hysterical, too abrupt. This feeling is only confirmed by Lilith's sudden, catatonic withdrawal and Vincent's final cry for help. At this point, one feels Rossen is trying too hard to pose the question of which world is the sane and normal. It is a brave attempt but it doesn't quite work, and this is the more disappointing after so much that does.

DAVID WILSON

INSIDE DAISY CLOVER

GAVIN LAMBERT HAS ADAPTED *Inside Daisy Clover* (Warner-Pathé) from his own novel of a couple of years ago. It wasn't a particularly good novel, certainly inferior to and slighter than his earlier exploration of Hollywood in *The Slide Area*, but nevertheless possessing a good deal of charm and some honesty. The form was a slangy diary kept rather irregularly by a child star. A sort of catcher in the rushes, Daisy was discovered at fourteen in 1952, rapidly exploited by Magnagram studios, finished at sixteen after a disastrous marriage to a homosexual actor. The novel concluded with her making a tentative comeback at the age of twenty-four from a base in Greenwich Village.

For some inexplicable reason the film is set in 1936, though the only consistent gesture in the direction of period décor is to have a Thirties car in the corner of every location shot. Its sense of time and place is pretty vague. Presumably because she was once a child star herself, Natalie Wood has been cast as Daisy. She makes a brave stab at the part, but is only slightly more convincing in it than Hayley Mills would be playing Camille.

The picture's visual style is built around long and middle-distance shots isolating Daisy—alone on a beach, picked out by a spotlight, abandoned in the desert, crossing

the vast expanses of cavernous studios, at the far end of cool, elegant rooms. This is the opposite of the vernacular intimacy of the book; we are very much *outside* Daisy Clover. At the end (the comeback postscript has been dropped) Daisy briefly picks up again the personal commentary with which the movie begins, and it jars badly. Matters are not helped either by the studied, even portentous, theatricality of Robert Mulligan's direction, which takes the film along at a uniformly laborious pace.

Only two scenes can be said to come off completely. The first of these is when Christopher Plummer as the heartless producer (a far cruder and less sympathetic figure than in the book) delivers a monologue about life, love and Hollywood to an unresponsive Daisy recumbent beside a swimming pool at dawn. The other is a climactic dubbing session at which Daisy breaks down inside a glass recording booth to be mocked by a film of herself, silently prancing through a circus number, continually repeated on the screen before her.

For the rest, there is little middle ground between the heavily over-emphasised and the unmotivatedly obscure, though some of the latter might be due to subsequent cutting. One key sequence with Daisy's deranged mother (an initially promising performance by Ruth Gordon) in a sanatorium has clearly and rather carelessly been lopped out.

PHILIP FRENCH

DE L'AMOUR

AS A STENDHALIAN EXERCISE, Jean Aurel's *De l'Amour* (Bargate) no doubt leaves something to be desired; but then, so does Stendhal's aphoristic study of love on which the film is based. One maxim is much like another, and whereas Stendhal the novelist brings the complexity of life to characters like La Sanseverina and Vanina Vanini, Stendhal the aphorist talks in glib abstractions about the Don Juans and Messalinas of love. Happily, Aurel also has the gift of

life, plus a brilliant quartet of actors—Michel Piccoli, Anna Karina, Johanna Shimkus, Elsa Martinelli—who refuse to be neatly pigeonholed as stereotypes in the battle of the sexes. While the commentary (irritatingly dubbed into English, though the dialogue is subtitled) solemnly intones one cleverly phrased Stendhalian generalisation after another, the film itself burrows quietly into pleasing little byways of its own.

Our first sight of Don Juan at work, for instance, comes when Johanna Shimkus, fluttering with feminine trepidation, succumbs in the dentist's chair to the equally professional masculine assurance of Michel Piccoli. In this very engaging sequence, the dentist carries out his treatment with irreproachable correctness, but his actions—raising the chair so that his victim lies conveniently to hand, bending solicitously over her to probe for the tender spot—become tantamount to an open invitation to bed. The invitation, of course, is accepted, and the film then slides neatly on to the business of jealousy as Piccoli drives Shimkus to a meeting with her "cousin", actually her ex-husband, and waits in the car while she indulges a rapid bout of love-making and re-emerges to face a barrage of insults because he has noticed that her laddered stocking is now on the other foot.

With this scene of jealousy, which takes place in a traffic jam, the film switches with the smoothest of gear-changes into its final phase—Don Juan's meeting with Nemesis in the shape of a woman who works even faster than he does, and so upsets him that he becomes impotent for the first time in his philandering career. This Messalina is Elsa Martinelli, parked alongside in the traffic jam and watching the squabble with such delightfully hungry yearning, that as the traffic-lights change Piccoli unceremoniously dumps Shimkus into the street and roars off in pursuit of his new find.

What is particularly pleasing about *De l'Amour* is its sense of continuity—the feeling that its characters are living at one particular time and place (Paris, shot by Edmond Richard with an unassuming brilliance that is a constant pleasure to watch), and do not

"DE L'AMOUR": MICHEL PICCOLI, ELSA MARTINELLI.



cease to exist when their episode is finished. The film opens cunningly with a brief street-corner quarrel which signals the end of a past affair between Piccoli and Anna Karina. Karina is then picked up by Philippe Avron and whisked off to seduction over a crayfish dinner, while Piccoli becomes entangled with Shimkus. But later, when Piccoli is deep in his new involvement with Elsa Martinelli and proudly shows her home movies of his previous conquests, Karina and Shimkus reappear on the screen, past history for him, but still very much present for us. What, one finds oneself wondering, are they doing *now*? A trick, perhaps, but one which gives the characters a past and a future, creates memories and involvements for them and us: no mean achievement for a film which is, after all, basically just another of those episode movies.

TOM MILNE

THE WRONG BOX

STEVENSON WROTE *The Wrong Box* in collaboration with his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, during a visit to America in 1887. More an escapade than a black comedy, the novel wanders effortlessly down several blind alleys from which the authors took an evident delight in extricating themselves. The result has a disarmingly elegant lunacy, and this is what appears to have attracted the American producer-writers Gelbart and Shevelove to adapt it for the screen. Sadly, the result is neither elegant nor disarming, for all that the credit titles—lush *art nouveau* wallpaper patterns accompanied by a John Barry score that almost outdoes Delerue—do much to raise expectations. As the film's opening shots are fired, Stevenson sinks almost without trace, leaving Bryan Forbes and seemingly every one of his show-biz friends to divide the spoils as they wish.

After the privations of *King Rat*, Forbes has clearly turned for relaxation to comedy and colour; only to relax so far as to abandon any real attempt at style or comic timing. One's complaint with *The Wrong Box* (BLC/Columbia) is not so much with the slack continuity and confusing structure, the Ealing Comedy vignettes, or the television aerials over the Royal Crescent in Bath. One is far more incensed by the self-indulgence of such mirthless slapstick as John Mills' attempts to kill his rival, the brutally overworked intrusion of Cicely Courtneidge and her Salvation Army group, and the surprising delusion that the feeble bandstand joke is worth repeating three times. As the camera floats apologetically up and away from the final graveyard bedlam, reducing the squabbling characters to ant-size, the temptation is to believe that Forbes himself was only too glad to abandon the whole thing.

This said, it is worth noting that the most successful aspect of *The Wrong Box* is the autonomy of each member of its cast. From the superbly introverted isolation of Peter Sellers' Dr. Pratt, enfolded in cats and alcoholic stupor, through the beautifully performed imperturbable dignity of Ralph Richardson's untiringly informative Joseph Finsbury ("Do you know how many times the word 'whip' occurs in the Old Testament?") is a typically deadly opening), to the almost total self-incarceration of Wilfrid Lawson, surely the most decrepit butler ever to crawl across the screen, its characters appear locked inside themselves, their



PETER SELLERS IN "THE WRONG BOX".

prejudices and their pasts. The only happiness is found by the young couple (played for slightly ineffectual charm by Michael Caine and Nanette Newman) whose obsessions fortunately include each other. To this extent, one can trace a link between *The Wrong Box* and Forbes' previous films. More's the pity that one sees little reason to bother.

PHILIP STRICK

DOCTOR ZHIVAGO

BORIS PASTERNAK'S NOVEL, with its episodic narrative style and sudden reverberating images, reads rather like a film. But it's a film by Resnais, Antonioni perhaps, certainly not David Lean.

In order to provide Lean with something like the kind of basic structure that he needs before his master craftsmanship can properly emerge, Robert Bolt has written a screenplay from which almost all the intellectual and imaginative content of the novel has been excised. We see Zhivago writing we know not what. He struggles out of the tramcar and has his fatal heart attack because he has caught sight of Lara walking along the street. There is little awareness of the revolution as a key character, little clue in fact as to what the book could possibly have been about. Even so, the plot remains too disjointed, too strange and open-ended, to work on the Lean level.

Doctor Zhivago (M-G-M) is a mixture of Lean's two well-tried methods of dealing with the classics: ornate Dickensian for scenes like the burial of Yuri's mother, or Yuri's own poetic inspiration by ice and candlelight; epic spectacular for ravages and battles and, of course, the long train journey from Moscow to the Urals. The intermission comes in the middle of this particular *pièce de résistance* (the *Zhivago* equivalent of the *Ben-Hur* chariot race), and part two is preceded by the stereophonic sound of a train rushing through the auditorium.

Inevitably perhaps, Lean has lost all round. On the one hand, his historical setting is only a backdrop and doesn't bear

thinking about if one has seen Dovzhenko and Eisenstein. On the other hand, he offers no visual substitute for Pasternak's prose style, which is more than usually derived from having looked hard beforehand: "The body of the suicide lay on the grass by the side of the bank. Blood had streaked his forehead with a dark sign, as if crossing out his face. The dry blood did not look like his blood but like something apart from him, a piece of sticking plaster or a streak of mud or a wet birch leaf." By comparison with this kind of observation, Lean is simply making pretty pictures with snow and stained glass and yellow daffodils.

The actors look good, but with the exception of Rod Steiger, who as Komarovsky has the most clearly defined role anyway, their performances lack momentum. Julie Christie as Lara and Geraldine Chaplin as Tonya are adequate to the demands made upon them; Omar Sharif is scarcely that. One is always conscious that nobody is Russian, and that nobody quite lives up to one's preconceived idea of the character that he or she portrays.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

OTHELLO

BRITISH HOME ENTERTAINMENTS do not claim that they have made a film of *Othello*, only that they have set out to record a theatrical event. Zarpas has already shown, in his *Elektra*, that it is possible to convey to a cinema audience something of the emotional impact of a flesh and blood performance. This 'cine-theatre' method has its natural limitations; but within them, if it succeeds, is just as valid as any of the other ways of recording reality on film.

In photographing the National Theatre's production of *Othello*, Stuart Burge has used a similar technique to the one used by the BBC to record the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Wars of the Roses*. Settings, costumes and make-up are unashamedly theatrical. Most of the movement and grouping of John Dexter's stage production remains intact. But the camera selects, and highlights in close-up, moments of emotional and narrative tension. It is a method which can affect the scale of individual performances in a curious way. Frank Finlay's Iago, for instance, which was infinitely small and sometimes incoherent on the stage, looms large and clear on the screen. Obviously there are disadvantages too. Technicolor is unkind to much of the make-up, especially to Olivier's blackened skin, which varies in tone from blue-black to green; and the sound recordists have not found a way of controlling the volume of voices pitched to fill a theatre. There are other weaknesses, some of them inherited from the original production, but none of them has any vital effect on the object of the exercise. The violence and horror of the play, its terrible beauty and its sardonic humour, come through.

Olivier exposes unsparingly the bestiality of a creature possessed by passion: in its unbuttoned grace the performance is marvelously in tune with the spirit of its age. The anguished progress of his jealous rage has all the cruel excitement of a bullfight. As Iago pricks, retreats, returns and pricks again, the great black bull bellows, bleeds, and lowers his head to charge, driving himself further and further towards the blood and dirt of his inevitable end. The effect is savage, painful and thrilling.

BRENDA DAVIES

GIANNI DI VENANZO



"LA SFIDA".

John Gillett

IT TOOK SOME TIME for the news of Gianni Di Venanzo's death in February to filter through to his friends and admirers in this country. Apart from a mention by Kenneth Tynan, no British newspaper carried an obituary, and even *Variety* gave him one of their shorter notices. He was never a major public name (a fate shared by most of the cinema's great cameramen), and judging from the recollections of those who worked with him, he was too inward an artist to worry much about such matters. More important, for those who knew his work (Joseph Losey, for instance) he was simply the greatest camera artist to emerge over the last fifteen years. Di Venanzo's career spanned nearly a quarter of a century, from his early days as assistant cameraman for Castellani, Visconti and Rossellini, to his mature work as lighting cameraman with Lizzani, Antonioni (*Le Amiche*, *Il Grido*, *La Notte*, *L'Eclisse*), Rosi (everything from *La Sfida* to *Momento della Verità*), Fellini (*8½*, *Giulietta*) and foreign directors like Losey (*Eve*) and Mankiewicz (*Anyone for Venice?*, on which he was working when he died at the age of 45).

Looking through his full list of credits (and sensing the number of single-minded directors he worked with), it is tempting to feel that perhaps Di Venanzo had no particular style of his own—how could the same artist possibly feel at home among the hot, arid exteriors of *Salvatore Giuliano*, the deep varnished courtroom interiors of *Mani sulla Città*, and the baroque furnishings of *Eve*? The answer, according to those I spoke with, was to be found in his extraordinary ability to establish a rapport with each director; a facility for sensing the particular textures they sought after; and sheer tenacity in getting those precise effects on to celluloid. When he worked with a prentice director like Lina Wertmüller on *I Basilischi*, he became almost a co-author, so distinctive was his depiction of the little town with its shimmering white buildings. Similarly, with the more established names, he was somehow able to make their visions seem inevitably right (the alternation between Mastroianni's apartment and Moreau walking the streets in *La Notte*, the dream-like garden in *8½*, the pastel-coloured beach scene in *Giulietta*). If Toland brought to the cinema a new conception of deep-toned blacks, Di Venanzo celebrated the kind of whiteness one invariably associates with Italy—the glare of sun on roads and buildings, the shafts of light seeping through closed shutters at siesta time . . .

What sort of man was he to work with? For Joseph Losey,

he was extremely fast, among other things. The first scene they shot on *Eve* was that long and difficult sequence when Baker watches Moreau from outside her window. This was shot in one night, together with several shorter scenes on the same location. "He was sometimes a violent, bitter man, but I came to love him and I think he respected me," Losey said. "He always worked with a regular camera crew of about nine who had intense loyalty for him, even when he bawled them out. His outbursts if anything went wrong were terrifying (I had to leave the room), yet twenty minutes later all would be forgotten. I don't think he ever read the script of *Eve*, yet he had the uncanny knack of knowing what you wanted, even though I had to talk in fractured French and Italian.

"He was marvellous in balancing exteriors and interiors and was never at all worried by complicated camera moves. Also, he had very firm ideas on what equipment would do: I brought a gyroscope for a hand camera to Venice, but he wouldn't test or use it. But he taught me many things. One day I was planning a set-up through a viewfinder which I showed to Gianni. 'No,' he said, 'you must see it only through the camera.' So I did and I've never used a finder since."

Losey also spoke about Di Venanzo's concern with the finished product, how he would follow up the laboratory work and argue until a perfect print was obtained. David Bretherton, editor on *Anyone for Venice?*, recalled that he and Mankiewicz were once kept waiting fifteen days for a set of rushes until Di Venanzo had obtained the right print quality. "When Gianni died, Pasquale De Santis, his regular operator, took over. There was little display of emotion, he simply got on with it, and we feel that most people will find it difficult to tell where their work joined—De Santis had been taught well. Of course, Gianni's death was a particularly heavy loss for Mankiewicz, who told me that he had never experienced more freedom than on this picture. It will be dedicated to Gianni."

Final impressions, then. First, a memory from Losey of Di Venanzo coming out on a Sunday without pay to get one shot which Losey knew he needed although the film was officially finished—"just Gianni, a focus puller and me"; and a phrase from David Bretherton which kept cropping up as he described how painstakingly Di Venanzo would shade his lighting off to get just the right degree of shadow on a face or object: "He had the courage to do difficult things." And that's not a bad epitaph for anyone.

OUT OF THE PLAIN

Robert Vas



"THE HOPELESS ONES": THE INTERROGATION CENTRE.

TEN YEARS HAVE PASSED since the abortive Hungarian Revolution in 1956. As its only practical result, the country now lives a life of relative material ease which is not matched by a general moral and spiritual responsibility. The latter is confused by second-hand intrusions of Western influences into socialist morale, and makes the blend somewhat superficial and provincial. While the almost regular jolts in the economy reveal that the material ease is only a half-measure, a practical and relatively enjoyable way of survival in the absence of a real solution.

The first stirrings in the cinema—István Gaál's *Current* (seen at the 1964 London Festival), István Szabó's *The Age of Day-Dreaming* (to be seen in BBC-2's indispensable World Cinema Season), as well as shorts by the same directors and by others of lesser importance—were autobiographical accounts by young people in their mid-twenties about their process of growing up, their tough yet tender battle between belief and disillusionment. These lyrical, authentic self-confessions float in a vacuum between the material and the spiritual, between a feeling of fashionable, second-hand nihilism and the remnants (in many ways undoubtedly valuable) of a socialist education. The older generation, like Zoltán Fábri in his *20 Hours*, chart a more thorough and systematic map of the nation's problems with a truth-searching care nurtured on twenty years spent finding a path through a constantly changing ideology.

Now, suddenly, the slow movement forward has become a landslide with a feature of Miklós Jancsó (his fourth), a director somewhere midway between younger and older generations, and a short by Zoltán Huszárik, a young man whose personality as much as his film defies classification.

* * *

The action of Jancsó's *The Hopeless Ones* (to be seen in London later in the year) takes place in the years between the collapse of the 1848 Revolution against the Hapsburgs and the subsequent compromise of 1867, and is loosely based on historical fact. Its anti-heroes are a group of "betyárs"—impoverished peasants, often habitual criminals—brigands who after the defeat continued their isolated guerilla

warfare. They became legendary characters: for a century songs, poems, folk-tales spoke about the tough, enduring character of these men, the hopelessness of their lonely existence, and the rough, coarse justice against the rich of their leader, Sándor Rózsa, a kind of Robin Hood of the Great Plain. When the action of the film starts, these groups have already been more or less rounded up, and a certain Count Ráday is assigned by the Hapsburg authorities to find "the hopeless ones"—Sándor himself, and his own personal band.

Step by step the film traces the course of events. But instead of just telling a story, it looks at history as Dreyer or Bresson viewed Joan of Arc, creating a stylisation to match and release the real inner dimensions behind the story. The great, hot achievement of Jancsó is that he has created a new, exciting vision for the important statements that he, indirectly, sets out to make. Form and content become inseparable, working with and against each other.

The scene is a desolate earthwork in the middle of a vast plain. There are two buildings, as spare as Dreyer's castle: a prison for the brigands, and the headquarters, serving as both interrogation and execution chamber. Both buildings have glaring white walls that gleam in the blazing, parching summer sun. There are no sounds except the soft wind, the curt words of command, and the birds singing. The dry, burned-out plain everywhere. No trace of the romantic, picturesque image of *Hortobágy*. This is a Kafkaish no man's land, deprived of context, stylised yet so very real. Against this flat, white background Jancsó manipulates his characters: the members of Ráday's force in their black cloaks; a peasant woman with a black headsquare; a mass of tattered people with rugged, resigned, tired faces. Imagine a long horizontal line, with a white building on one side, and a few black dots, distant people, on the other.

The film is very consciously, though never self-consciously, composed for the wide screen, and is splendid in its sheer visual magnificence. But there is more to it than that. In composition and tonality this is a specifically Hungarian vision. The horizontal line was surely dictated by the landscape, the domineering plain that left so rich a mark on the national character and literature. Its hard blacks against white

suggest the toughness, the contrasts of this character: the rich fertility of summer as much as the tragedy, secretly maturing under the blazing heat. Out of these elements of light and dark, of fertile summer and reaping death, Jancsó creates a rich texture of the suppression of men by men which smells of human sweat and leather belts. Oppression becomes as inevitable as the conflict between black and white, and the gap between the two buildings and their inhabitants as irreconcilable as these two colours.

The oppressor communicates with crisp, laconic commands. Troops come and go, emerging from an indifferent nothingness, fulfilling orders by commanders who appear and disappear, replaced from one scene to the next. Time passes, but we don't know how long. Doors open and close; unexplained shots are heard; suddenly a military band begins to play. No one is puzzled, no one asks questions. This is authority, owing explanation to nobody. Alignments change from one minute to the next. People become faceless, impersonal. And in the end everything suddenly falls into place, closing like a trap in the smooth, perfect, devilish machinery of the oppressor. Jancsó adopts a deliberate, unemotional curttness. The Kafkaish insecurity, the disturbing atmosphere of intellectual *angst* and sheer animal fear, is heightened by his style, full of omissions, abrupt fadeouts, sudden outbursts of scorching violence followed by calm, submission, defeat.

Jancsó's vision is founded on a leashed directness; the way he keeps a level head, observes without underlining, strips image and sound to bare necessity (there is little dialogue, and even that is strictly to the point, the idiom is contemporary; and no music until the very last minute, like Bresson's shattering drum-roll in *Jeanne d'Arc*). Take for instance the single shot when a prisoner tries to escape by running across a field towards a retreating line of women who have just brought parcels of food. Women and prisoner run away into the distance; the two guards watch the prisoner, undisturbed, unmoving. Quite a few seconds pass. Their passivity becomes strange and unexplained, the deserter is already far away. Then, suddenly, two horsemen appear at the side of the screen, and overtake the prisoner with contemptuous ease. In a single shot (and *because* the action is matter-of-factly told in this single shot), one feels the whole calm indifference, the implacable cocksureness of oppression.

Victims are shot and hanged; traitors lynched; soldiers stripped of rank; a naked girl is flogged to death; prisoners are driven to betrayal and suicide. But the film never dwells on these outward manifestations of violence. Typically, the first victim is shot in the back as he walks away from the camera, and falls as a small black point on the horizon. Instead, Jancsó is concerned with the murder of the human spirit; with submission, betrayal; with the muffled psychological process of oppression, and its insatiable, parasitic hunger for more and more victims to keep the machinery going. The strange, disturbing tension of this film springs from the apparently inevitable success of this machinery. But oppression has its repercussions even on the oppressor. There can be no winner here, only losers.

However, the attempt to break the resistance and round up the Hopeless Ones ends in frightening success. One after the other, the brigands give in, betray one another. Friend turns against friend, literally with a whip. And in the end they walk blindly into the last trap. Throughout, Jancsó quite consciously deprives these folk heroes of their aura of romance: they are shown not on horseback against the sunset, but as a bunch of miserable, lethargic, often depraved thugs who gradually resign themselves even to slavery. One has to destroy a few idols to make a real self-reckoning possible, and this is exactly what Jancsó sets out to do. With a burning intellectual charge, he invites his viewers to throw away the pleasant, comfortable dream of Hungary's romantic-heroic history and face up to reality: black as much as white, oppressor as much as oppressed. A challenge to self-analysis of a small and tragic country surrounded by so many different tensions in the middle of Europe.

* * *

It would be a mistake to seek any direct analogies in the action of the film, for its real political content is its adult, mature tone, and its determination to square accounts with the past, both recent and distant. This makes *The Hopeless Ones* a historical film in the best sense of the word: a recreation of an episode from the past, viewed from the present, so that each impinges on the other.

In its twenty minutes, Zoltán Huszárik's short film *Elégia* (awarded a prize but not fully appreciated at the 1966 Ober-

"THE HOPELESS ONES": GUARD (CENTRE) AND PRISONERS.



hausen Festival) strives after the same synthesis: to release a new, more than realistic, *poetic* film language to destroy yet another idol. In a much less controlled way than *The Hopeless Ones*, this first film (or better, cinematic outburst) by a very young director is (in the words of a Hungarian critic) "a painting that will tolerate no other hanging on the same wall." *Elégia* is ostensibly a rhapsodic allegory about horses, but its real subject is an embittered, depressive comment on the human situation. Like Lenica's *Labyrinth*, it deals with the systematic destruction of the ideal.

In the beginning there was the rich, rewarding mutual friendship between man and animal; and the film reflects this feeling with all the noble beauty of the "Ideal" theme in Bartók's "Two Portraits". And then, by means of symbols and juxtapositions, stylisation in rhythm, music, montage and composition—in other words, a re-evaluation of the real by a poet—the film tells of the many elements that begin to intrude on this relationship. Alienation in modern life? The selfish inhumanity in man's nature? Discord sets in. The gap widens. Man and animal become lonely. Step by step the ideal is destroyed, and finally man becomes the assassin of his former friend. He butchers him, and cherishes horseshoe and harness as heirlooms, like doomed, sad relics from Hiroshima.

The sequence in the slaughterhouse has a truly cataclysmic terror. This is the climax of Huszárík's excitement and indignation at the tragedy. Dwelling on physical details, he wants to shock us because he himself is shocked. His vision has the same menace and pain as Franju's. The blood of the animals

becomes a symbol of the horror that awaits us who move so rapidly from the ideal towards the deformed. And the huge eye-balls of the dead horse stare blindly at a senseless destruction which is as tragic as it is inevitable.

With the dark pessimism of a ballad, the fluttering passion of a rhapsody, the popular conception of Hungary as "a Nation on Horseback" is systematically shattered. And because the film is a seething outburst of helpless anger, it pays little heed to purity of form. In a way this impurity seems not only justifiable, but a positive virtue: it amplifies the pain, the anger which seeks expression through any possible means. The film is like an argument between the film-maker and himself, searching for words, struggling for expression, faltering but never ceasing to feel passionately about the subject. If Jancsó's film reflects a sober, controlled stock-taking, Huszárík's storms tempestuously out to the barricades. In the past ten years Hungary has withdrawn more and more from its lost barricades towards the front lines of sober intellect. And now these two films re-enact, in a way, the Hungarian tragedy, the duality in the Hungarian character. Both completely uncompromising, their own human and artistic conscience their sole measure, their aim is that not only should an audience look at a film, but that the film should look at, reflect, the audience.

Since this article was written Miklós Jancsó's film has been acquired for screening at the Academy Cinema. It will be shown here under the title of "The Round-Up".

BOOK REVIEWS

TOWER OF BABEL: Speculations on the Cinema, by Eric Rhode. (Weidenfeld and Nicolson. An Encounter Book. 36s.)

THIS IS A PUZZLING, fascinating, and occasionally irritating book. It consists of eleven essays on individual directors. The directors are as disparate as Ophüls and Eisenstein, Humphrey Jennings and Jacques Rivette. The essays are homogeneous at least in a personal and stylistic sense: they are all unmistakably written by Eric Rhode. There is also evidence of a certain unity of theme. With one or two exceptions they all tend to revolve around problems of the City and modern urban society, and the concepts, if not the words, of alienation and *anomie*. A further theme, which the author tentatively (and the dust-jacket more categorically) puts forward as primary, is the relationship in the work of these directors between individual temperament and insights on the one hand, and ideology on the other. It is here, where the book puts forward its most ambitious claim to originality and unity of purpose, that it seems to me least coherent and least successful.

Mr. Rhode appears to subscribe to the view that ideologies and -isms of the capital-letter variety, like Catholicism and Marxism, are utterly inflexible orthodoxies, and that if a presumed Catholic or Marxist director has an approach which is not strictly orthodox, he must therefore be deviating from the orthodoxy and in conflict with it. This is the view of the Inquisition and of Zhdanovite Commissars. It is not the experience of the majority of artists, nor need it be the view of the critic. Of course there can be external constraint, as in the Soviet Union, which may or may not be accepted by the artist. And there can be internal compulsions which lead an artist to be aware of a conflict between the objective demands of the doctrine

he accepts intellectually and the subjective demands of his personality. But to see Vigo as subject to the pressures of anarchism and surrealism, and Wajda as torn between Catholicism, Marxism and Polish Nationalism, as Mr. Rhode is apt to, is quite unduly abstract. In the case of Wajda it is both unfair to him as an artist and untrue to the historic experience of Poland.

This lack of concreteness in considering political and ideological issues mars even his otherwise extremely sensitive essay on Satyajit Ray, though it should be said in all fairness that this essay was presumably written before the appearance of *Charulata*, which is the most political of Ray's films and most clearly demonstrates his absorption of, and ability to interpret, Indian political experience. Away from alien politics and alien ideologies, however, Mr. Rhode is on firmer ground. Two things in particular engage his sympathy: the rooted world of Humphrey Jennings and the paranoid rootlessness of *Paris Nous Appartient*. Since Jennings is very much a forgotten director, and Rivette a classic case of the *auteur maudit*, and since Mr. Rhode treats both with especial care and insight, these essays are the most interesting in the collection.

Jennings Mr. Rhode treats in juxtaposition and contrast to Eisenstein—a montage effect of which by his principles he ought to disapprove. The contrast is illuminating and curiously favourable to Jennings; but then the author is, as might be expected, rather vicious about Eisenstein. Rivette he couples with Fritz Lang, pursuing and developing the suggestive reference to *Metropolis* in *Paris Nous Appartient*. He defends Lang against Kracauer's charge of quasi-fascist irrationalism, and Rivette against those critics who found his film formless and nothing more than a paranoid fantasy, stressing the elements of rationality in Lang's work (Lohmann in *M*) and the formal coherence of Rivette's film. But he points also to an essential difference, in the way that Lang puts himself in the centre, at the point of control, while Rivette's position is that of the Kafkaesque outsider, the uncomprehending victim. This point is important since it provides a key to the specific formal characteristics of the two directors' work, as well as to their opposing content.

It is in connection with Lang and Rivette that he brings in most explicitly his other central theme of the City and its treatment in the cinema. This is a fascinating theme, and my only complaint is that since it undoubtedly is a central theme of the book, it is a pity that it is not isolated and studied in relation to other directors—Antonioni, say, as well as Fellini, and some of the Americans, including Lang himself in his American period, not considered here. But perhaps to ask for this would mean asking for another book entirely. As it is, the result has the virtues and vices of a football team like Manchester United: eleven highly individual and talented contributions, occasional flashes of brilliance, offset by occasional near-disastrous blunders, and above all an apparent lack of co-ordinated strategy.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

HAROLD LLOYD'S WORLD OF COMEDY, by William Cahn. Illustrated. (Allen & Unwin, 30s.) **THE MARX BROTHERS: THEIR WORLD OF COMEDY**, by Allen Eyles. Illustrated. (Zwemmer, 10s. 6d.) **MAX LINDER**, by Charles Ford. Illustrated. (Seghers, Paris, 7.10Fr.)

LAUGHTER IS A very difficult thing to write about. Not only are funny men sometimes disconcertingly solemn to talk to, but the exact secret of their success seems often hazy and indefinable. In the first of these books, Harold Lloyd, speaking through his biographer, tries to show how his spruce, healthy, all-American hero evolved—the Glass Character, as he calls him—through the fantastic successes of the Twenties and the less resplendent Thirties (Lloyd's sound films like *Professor Beware* and *The Cat's Paw* are more interesting, though, than some commentators allow). As with other books of the type, there is disappointingly little about how the films were actually made or the precise nature of Lloyd's collaboration with his directors and players. A good deal of space is devoted to his appraisals of fellow comics—generous comments for the most part, but not particularly revealing—and to his philanthropic activities of recent years. What does emerge is a portrait of a "nice guy", a family man who invested his money wisely and kept control of his films and survived to see his work enthusiastically reappraised by a younger generation. Not a book for specialists (there are no appendices or credit lists) but worth a look for the odd insight into Lloyd's career. A splendid collection of illustrations takes in old posters and advertisements; as well as many stills of Harold climbing those cliff-like buildings so treacherously sprung with booby-traps.

By contrast, Allen Eyles' book on the Marx Brothers concentrates almost entirely on the films, with total recall of plots and situations and much quoting of dialogue. Whether this method is successful depends largely on the needs of the reader. Anyone wishing to pinpoint favourite scenes could find the book invaluable; others may find that such a detailed exposure of gags kills the jokes stone dead on the page. Mr. Eyles is clearly very fond of the films, and he is particularly good in showing how the Brothers' characters changed slightly from picture to picture. Groucho's prolonged love-hate relationship with Margaret Dumont is detailed with relish and the lady is rightly given an appendix to herself.

Max Linder's career was shorter but certainly not less illustrious, and M. Ford's survey, from the earliest films of 1906 to Linder's tragic suicide in 1925, demonstrates that he was far more versatile than the permanent image of the dandyish figure lounging around salons might suggest. The second half of this affectionate, verbose book consists of some witty notes by Linder himself on how he felt about his roles, and a collection of *hommages* by distinguished men of the theatre and cinema (including Chaplin, who acknowledged him as his master). The recent compilation by Linder's daughter from his best American films, together with this book, will remind English readers of how little we know Linder's work. Ford's filmography shows how prolific he was; René Clair called him "ce grand précurseur." Can somebody now find the lost films?

JOHN GILLETT

CANNES FESTIVAL

continued from page 127

duty to expose. I don't think I have ever seen a better portrait of a young Fascist and of the kind of fascination he can exert.

Winter Kept Us Warm was made by a man of 22, and at a cost of £2,800. I mention these facts, but the film doesn't need any excuses. A tale of Toronto university life made by a man who had hardly graduated, it seems to capture the feeling of the North American university better than any I can think of. But the film's virtues are not restricted to the purely mimetic: it is a psychological study of two boys, one a sensitive freshman from the sticks, the other what is generally called a big-man-on-campus. Contrary to convention, it is the womanising older boy who falls desperately—and unrequitedly—in love with the younger one, thus neatly making Secter's point that it is often the quiet misfit in society who is basically more secure than the "swinger". This is probably true, but dramatically speaking it allows the director one of the most stunning examples seen in many a year of audience peripeteia, of that moment when all of a sudden one realises that one has got it all wrong, that something quite different is happening up there on the screen, but that that something is nevertheless completely convincing and right.

RICHARD ROUD

CORRESPONDENCE

Variations on Eve

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—May I raise an uncommitted voice on behalf of the Hakim version of Joseph Losey's *Eve*? I saw it when it was first shown in London and have since seen it again twice—once in the same version and once at the N.F.T. in the Finland version approved by Mr. Losey. I must honestly say that while I understand the difference between them, not only are they equally good each in its own way but I find that the Hakim version is artistically more successful.

The Hakim version is a sharper film. It certainly has a crude English post-synchronisation of a couple of characters, but not disastrously so. The Hakim version owes this sharpness, I think, very largely to its soundtrack, which omits the Miles Davis music and leaves the mind to take its cues from the performances and the visual magnificence only. The silences are visually very attractive, and the emotional punch of the "Willow" theme is also strengthened by the contrast.

The cuts made by the Hakims (which are seen largely intact in the Finland version) are another matter, but even here I found that the original scenes did not significantly add to an appreciation of the film, which still expresses its enigmas in a sophisticated style. Indeed, I found the flavour of the Hakim soundtrack more in keeping with this sophistication.

Mr. Losey is absolutely right to show up sly business by promoters and to fight against behind-the-back tampering. I am in any case predisposed to hate anyone guilty of interfering with a work of art for commercial reasons... "Hakims the Hackers," I felt, in advance. I boiled as I listened to Mr. Losey's recorded comments on the history of the two versions. And having seen both, I know he has been badly treated. But... artistically I can no longer agree with him.

The critics were patronising about *Eve*. They seemed to have been tipped off. At the first viewing, I was already aware that something was supposed to be wrong with it. Yet I was completely knocked over by the Hakim version and began to wonder how it could be improved on at all. Now that, thanks to Mr. Losey's agitation and the B.F.I., I have been shown how, I find I still love the "wrong" version. Perhaps the Hakims don't deserve to have this said of their version, and to be fair to Mr. Losey he hasn't said it was a bad film—just that it wasn't exactly what he meant it to be. Therefore, I would like to suggest that the critics give *Eve* in the Hakim version an objective re-viewing sometime. I hope to.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES CLARK

London, W.2.

Woman of Summer

SIR,—David Wilson's analysis of the work of Franklin Schaffner once again stirs up speculation about that flawed but beautiful film *Woman of Summer*.

Meade Roberts' screenplay, faithful for the most part to William Inge's *A Loss of Roses*, alarmingly betrays the spirit and intentions of the parent-work in its closing sequences, where Lila, strengthened by Kenny's concern for her degradation in the strip-routine, decides to break with her lover, Ricky, and stand alone and independent.

Until those final scenes, somewhat arbitrarily stuck on to the real ending of the story, Schaffner's direction has been deft and sure. He secures from Joanne Woodward a performance that matches in its intelligence and sensitivity her tour de force in *The Three Faces of Eve*, and, lovingly observed by Ellsworth Fredericks' camera, Lila moves through the film bathed in sunlight, arrayed in white—Inge's vulnerable, battered innocent to the life. Richard Beymer, too, responds well to Schaffner's direction.

But the handling of the balloon-dance sequence and what follows verges on the melodramatic, and neither Beymer nor Joanne Woodward seems at ease. Small wonder: the film has really ended some time before, and this curious epilogue, almost sickening in its acquiescence to conventional morality, happy-ending improbabilities and the film's lurid American title, *The Stripper*, provokes thoughts of studio intervention and, conceivably, re-editing. Was the original work 'doctored'? It is difficult to be sure. But the still with David Wilson's article does nothing to allay suspicion. If memory serves, the scene depicted there never appears in the film as shown in this country.

Yours faithfully,

LIONEL GODFREY

Leamington Spa.

Benjamin Christensen

SIR,—I am happy to be able to add some information about the films of Benjamin Christensen (see John Gillett's article *The Mysterious X* in the Spring issue). Until now the Danish Film Museum has had prints of Christensen's first three films, *The Mysterious X*, *The Night of Revenge* and *Haxan*; and prints of his last four films (made in Denmark from 1939 to 1942) are still with the production company Nordisk Films Kompagni.

For years we have been looking for the missing eight films between his two Danish periods. Recently we found in another archive a fine print of Christensen's last American film *Seven Footprints to Satan*, produced in 1929 by Warner Bros., starring Thelma Todd and Creighton Hale. It proved to be an inventive and fantastic horror picture, which makes one even more anxious to find his other American films. From another archive we are expecting in the near future a print of his only German film *Seine Frau, die Unbekannte*, of 1923, starring Willy Fritsch and Lil Dagover. So now we lack only six of his films, and perhaps it will soon be possible to give Mr. Christensen the place in the history of the cinema which he so obviously deserves.

Yours faithfully,
IB MONTY

The Danish Film Museum,
Copenhagen.

SIR,—I very much enjoyed John Gillett's article *The Mysterious X*, on that neglected figure Benjamin Christensen. Perhaps I can clarify the details of Christensen's American career. The director made six films there, none of them in the strict sense a horror story. *The Devil's Circus* (1926) featured Norma Shearer as a trapeze artist whose jealous rival, the wife of the lion-tamer, severs a rope and precipitates the poor girl into the lions' enclosure. *Mockery* (1927) was a story about a tragically disfigured peasant during the Russian Revolution (Lon Chaney), who loves his beautiful countess mistress from afar while she becomes passionately involved with a revolutionary captain. *The Hawk's Nest* (1928) was again a story of powerful passions involving a disfigured man: Milton Sills played "The Hawk," a salesman who has his face altered by plastic surgery to become unrecognisable; he then avenges a slight done to his (male) partner. Christensen's remaining three American films were *The Haunted House*, with Chester Conklin, *The House of Horror* and *Seven Footprints to Satan*: all were routine comedies, and Christensen returned disillusioned to Denmark, where he was silent for the next ten years.

Yours faithfully,
CHARLES HIGHAM

Sydney, Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Alfie*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Modesty Blaise*.
WARNER-PATHE for *The Moving Target*, *Darling*.
UNITED ARTISTS for *A Hard Day's Night*.
UNITED ARTISTS (PARIS) for *Un Homme et une Femme*.
BLC/BRITISH LION for *Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment*, *Life at the Top*.
BLC/COLUMBIA for *Casino Royale*, *The Wrong Box*.
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *The Eclipse*, *The Silence*.
CONNOISSEUR FILMS for *Alphaville*.
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *La Jetée*, *Le Mani sulla Città*.
COMPTON-CAMEO FILMS for *Cul-de-Sac*.
BARGATE FILMS for *De l'Amour*.
SMALL FILMS for *Fanny Hill*.
UNIFRANCE FILM/GALA for *Masculin Feminin*, photograph of Jean-Luc Godard.
UNIVERSAL for *A Countess from Hongkong*.
UNIVERSAL/ENTERPRISE for *Fahrenheit 451*.
INTERNACIONAL FILMS for *Chimes at Midnight*.
ARCO FILM for *Uccellacci e Uccellini*.
LUX FILM for *La Sfida*.
GEORGES DE BEAUREGARD for *Suzanne Simonin la Religieuse de Diderot*.
MAG BODARD-PARC FILM-ARGOS FILMS for *Au Hasard Balthazar*.
HUNGAROFILM for *The Hopeless Ones*.
FILM POLSKI-STUDIO UNIT-MOSFILM for *Lenin in Poland*.
BRIDGE FILMS/PETER THEOBALD for *The Blow Up*.
ZOE DOMINIC for *A Patriot for Me*.
BBC TV/KEVIN BILLINGTON for *Matador*, *A Socialist Childhood*, *Mary McCarthy's Paris*.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *L'Age d'Or*.

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FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

***ALFIE** (Paramount) Coarse and overblown version of Bill Naughton's miniature tragic-comedy about a Cockney Lothario. Heavily directed by Lewis Gilbert, it nevertheless provides two touching studies in depression by Vivien Merchant and Julia Foster. (Michael Caine, Millicent Martin, Shelley Winters. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

AROUND THE WORLD UNDER THE SEA (M-G-M) Manned by five men and a lone woman, a submarine tours the world on a perilous scientific mission, with the usual silly results. Underwater staging and equipment quite effective. (Lloyd Bridges, Keenan Wynn, David McCallum, Shirley Eaton; director, Andrew Marton. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

****BATTLE OF THE BULGE** (Warner-Pathé) Straightforward account of the Germans' last major offensive of the Second World War. Lasting three hours but never boring, thanks to strong narrative, splendid locations, fine staging of tank battles, minimal doses of messages and heroics. (Henry Fonda, Robert Ryan, Robert Shaw; director, Ken Annakin. Technicolor, Ultra Panavision presented in Cinerama.)

*****BLONDE IN LOVE, A** (Contemporary) Czech factory girl falls tentatively for dance-band musician who doesn't want to be tied down. Very funny, wistful and endearing, and filmed with an eye so exact and watchful that there isn't a teenage cliché in the film. (Vladimir Pucholt, Hana Brejchova; director, Milos Forman.)

BLUE MAX, THE (Fox) Painstaking 2½-hour reconstruction of aerial dogfighting in the last months of the 1914-18 War, seen from a fictional German viewpoint. Lumbered with plodding script and brutish hero, it never gets off the ground, but James Mason and the vintage aircraft provide some diversion. (George Peppard, Ursula Andress; director, John Guillermin. DeLuxe Color, CinemaScope.)

BOEING BOEING (Paramount) Painfully static adaptation of Marc Camoletti's stage farce about a man who keeps a roster of air hostesses on different flying schedules as his mistresses. Enthusiastic acting (Tony Curtis, Jerry Lewis) wrings out a few laughs. (Thelma Ritter, Dany Saval, Suzanna Leigh, Christiane Schmidtmer; director, John Rich. Technicolor.)

***BOHEME, LA** (B.H.E./Eagle) Franco Zeffirelli's lavish production transported to the screen direct from La Scala, Milan. Few directorial flourishes, and the singing, particularly Mirella Freni's, comes over well in spite of some very odd lip synchronisation. (Gianni Raimondo, Rolando Panerai, Adriana Martino; Technicolor.)

BORN FREE (BLC/Columbia) Transparently well-meaning attempt to film Joy Adamson's lion books. As in most films about wild beast pets, the animals are cute and the humans embarrassingly coy. (Virginia McKenna, Bill Travers; director, James Hill. Technicolor, Panavision.)

CASANOVA '70 (Paramount) Standard Italian sex comedy, lamely dubbed, with Mastroianni bedding an endless succession of lovely ladies as a NATO officer whose jaded sexual appetite must be stimulated by danger. (Virna Lisi, Marisa Mell, Michèle Mercier; director, Mario Monicelli. Eastman Colour.)

*****CUL-DE-SAC** (Compton-Cameo) Jet black comedy, with strong Pinter overtones, in which Donald Pleasence and Françoise Dorléac are the married couple entertaining a faded gangster at their house on Holy Island. Ruthlessly funny, even though the momentum doesn't quite carry it through the final gear-shift. (Lionel Stander, Jack McGowan; director, Roman Polanski.) Reviewed.

****DE L'AMOUR** (Bargate) The Stendhalian concept of love illustrated in a series of anecdotes involving three enchanting ladies—Anna Karina, Johanna Shimkus and Elsa Martinelli. An uneven but thoroughly engaging film. (Michel Piccoli; director, Jean Aurel.) Reviewed.

***DOCTOR ZHIVAGO** (M-G-M) Curiously synthetic rendering of Pasternak's elusive novel. Omar Sharif, Julie Christie and Geraldine Chaplin pall beside the originals, and Freddie Young's picture postcard photography is no substitute for the sweep of Pasternak's Russia. (Rod Steiger, Ralph Richardson, Alec Guinness; director, David Lean. Metrocolor, Panavision 70.) Reviewed.

******EXTERMINATING ANGEL, THE** (Contemporary) Devastating satire (idle rich, impotent Church), or brilliant surrealist joke? Either way it is Buñuel at his most biting funny as a group of aristocrats quite irrationally find themselves incapable of leaving a palatial mansion after a party, and camp down for days of primitive goings-on. (Silvia Pinal, Augusto Benedico, Claudio Brook.)

***INSIDE DAISY CLOVER** (Warner-Pathé) Surprisingly clumsy vulgarisation by Gavin Lambert of his own novel, which makes it look like a late entry in the *Harlow* stakes. Natalie Wood, as the 14-year-old heroine, struggles gamely against a handicap of some 14 years. (Christopher Plummer, Robert Redford, Ruth Gordon; director, Robert Mulligan. Technicolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.

*****IT HAPPENED HERE** (United Artists) Impressively ingenious and unaffectedly alarming pseudo-reconstruction of what might have happened if the Nazis had landed in 1940. Gains a lot of force from its young directors' willingness to see things through to logical conclusions. (Pauline Murray, Sebastian Shaw; directors, Kevin Brownlow, Andrew Molloy.)

***KHARTOUM** (United Artists) Relentlessly academic account of Gordon's last stand, beautifully photographed, lavishly mounted, intelligently acted, but ultimately dull. Charlton Heston steals all the honours from Laurence Olivier's blackamoore Mahdi. (Ralph Richardson, Richard Johnson; director, Basil Dearden. Technicolor, Ultra Panavision presented in Cinerama.)

****LILITH** (BLC/Columbia) Robert Rossen's last film, a strange blend of lyrical and hysterical in the private world of a fragile, destructive schizophrenic. Shuftan's photography exactly right, and Jean Seberg's performance intelligent; but there is something missing somewhere. (Warren Beatty, Peter Fonda, Kim Hunter.) Reviewed.

MADE IN PARIS (M-G-M) A lavish champagne mixture of Parisian fashion-houses and romantic entanglements, which turns out rather sourly with Ann-Margret as the flat bubble in the centre. (Louis Jourdan, Richard Crenna; director, Boris Sagal. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

MAN COULD GET KILLED, A (Rank) Stuttering comedy-thriller set among a cosmopolitan band of tired spies in old Lisbon. Poker-faced James Garner falls foul of the spies, the British Embassy, and Melina Mercouri, outrageously simpering as the local vamp. (Tony Franciosa, Sandra Dee; directors, Ronald Neame, Cliff Owen. Technicolor, Panavision.)

***MANDRAKE, THE** (Miracle) Spirited, if slightly starchy, adaptation of Machiavelli's satirical comedy about the notary's beautiful young wife who submits in vain to every known cure for infertility until a handsome young lover is insinuated into her bed. (Rosanna Schiaffino, Philippe Leroy, Jean-Claude Brialy; director, Alberto Lattuada.)

*****MANI SULLA CITTA, LE** (Contemporary) At first sight a trifle disappointing after the fireworks of *Salvatore Giuliano*, Rosi's film improves enormously on acquaintance: a fascinating dissection of the complex mechanism of political expediency. (Rod Steiger, Guido Alberti, Salvo Randone.) Reviewed.

***MICKEY ONE** (BLC/Columbia) Kafka, American style, as a young man (Warren Beatty), haunted by the idea of some unnameable sin, wanders through the contemporary anguished scene in search of something or other. Gamely fighting through a forest of symbols, Arthur Penn's direction is occasionally riveting. (Alexandra Stewart, Hurd Hatfield, Franchot Tone.)

****MODESTY BLAISE** (Fox) Ephemeral fun or meaningful art? The debate is likely to rage, but at least the stylish visual surface bears Losey's unmistakable signature and is infinitely watchable. (Monica Vitti, Dirk Bogarde, Terence Stamp, Rossella Falk. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

MOMENT TO MOMENT (Rank) Archetypal woman's magazine stuff (i.e. *Brief Encounter* for the tourist trade). Jean Seberg as a lonely American housewife, and Sean Garrison as an artistically-inclined naval officer, suffer a chastely passionate romance against lush Riviera back-grounds. (Honor Blackman, Arthur Hill; director, Mervyn LeRoy. Technicolor.)

***MOVING TARGET, THE** (Warner-Pathé) Consciously nostalgic pastiche of Raymond Chandler and the Forties thriller, which never quite hits the nail on the head and is much too glossily surfaced. Rather endearing, all the same. (Paul Newman, Julie Harris, Lauren Bacall, Shelley Winters; director, Jack Smight. Technicolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.

OSCAR, THE (Paramount) Hollywood lifts the lid off Hollywood again, and everyone shouts and screams and machinates in a frenzied attempt to reveal what a den of amorality it all is. But it isn't really like that; even in Hollywood's idea of Hollywood rats don't win Oscars. (Stephen Boyd, Elke Sommer, Tony Bennett; director, Russell Rouse. Pathécolor.)

***OTHELLO** (B. H. E./Eagle Films) Straightforward record of the National Theatre production. Colour and sound quality variable, but the essence of the play comes over with genuine theatrical excitement and provides a fascinating close-up of Olivier's tour de force as the Moor. (Frank Finlay, Maggie Smith; director, Stuart Burge. Technicolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.

PATCH OF BLUE, A (M-G-M) Kind, understanding Sidney Poitier rescues poor little blind girl (white, of course) from sluttish mum (Shelley Winters), drunken granddad (Wallace Ford) and a wicked world. Slick and weepy. (Elizabeth Hartman; director, Guy Green. Panavision.)

******PIERROT LE FOU** (Gala) Godard's further adventures with a film which is "gay and sad at the same time"—a vision of black despair exploding in a brilliant burst of fireworks. Coutard's superb camerawork makes the Riviera a Garden of Eden in which love is menaced by gun-runners, murder and a woman's betrayal. (Anna Karina, Jean-Paul Belmondo. Eastman Colour, Techniscope.)

****SHE AND HE** (Contemporary) New Wave-ish, Antonioni-ish Japanese film about a middle-class wife who becomes obsessed by the inhabitants of a squalid wasteland confronting her comfortable flat. Often striking, but slow and rather too derivative. (Sachiko Hidari, Kikui Yamashita; director, Susumu Hani.)

STAGECOACH (Fox) Lame remake of the Ford classic, which embroiders unnecessary detail, funks the rescue by cavalry, is accompanied by a crude theme song, and has (apart from Van Heflin as the sheriff) just about as unsuitable a cast as one could imagine. (Ann-Margret, Bing Crosby, Alex Cord, Red Buttons, Robert Cummings; director, Gordon Douglas. DeLuxe Colour, CinemaScope.)

TROUBLE WITH ANGELS, THE (BLC/Columbia) Hayley Mills raises hell in a convent school which includes Gypsy Rose Lee as dance instructor, while Mother Superior (Rosalind Russell) looks on beatifically and knows all along that devilish tomboys make good nuns. (June Harding, Binnie Barnes; director, Ida Lupino. Pathécolor.)

*****VIVA MARIA** (United Artists) Moreau and Bardot as the two revolutionary Marias, equally adept at inventing striptease or firing Edwardian machine-guns. One of those elaborately carefree extravaganzas which sounds terrible; actually gay, brightly plumed, full of engaging fancies and wayward charm. (George Hamilton, Paulette Goddard; director, Louis Malle. Eastman Colour, Panavision.)

WEEKEND AT DUNKIRK (Fox) How the Boche spoiled the Boy Scout outing. Pretty Boudin colours on the beach (photographed by Decaë), creaking direction from Henri Verneuil, and some of the most alarming French-American dialogue on record falling unbidden from the lips of Jean-Paul Belmondo. (François Périer, Catherine Spaak. Eastman Colour, Franska.)

WOMAN IN WHITE (Gala) Another of Autant-Lara's impassioned pleas—this time for every Frenchwoman's right to contraception. Very competently done along overwrought *Dr. Kildare* lines. (Marie-José Nat, Jean Valmont, Claude Gensac.)

***WRONG BOX, THE** (BLC/Columbia) Slapdash black comedy with a few splendid moments, provided mainly by Ralph Richardson and Wilfrid Lawson. But it would have done much better to stop inventing its own jokes and trust to the enchanting R. L. Stevenson-Lloyd Osbourne original. (Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Peter Sellers, Michael Caine, John Mills, Nanette Newman; director, Bryan Forbes. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

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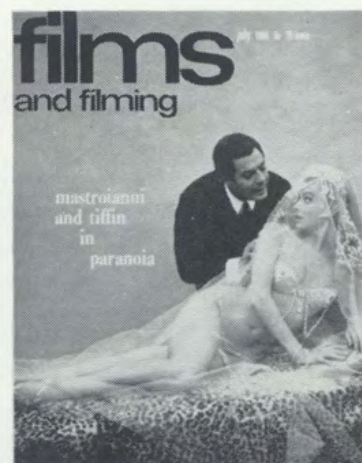
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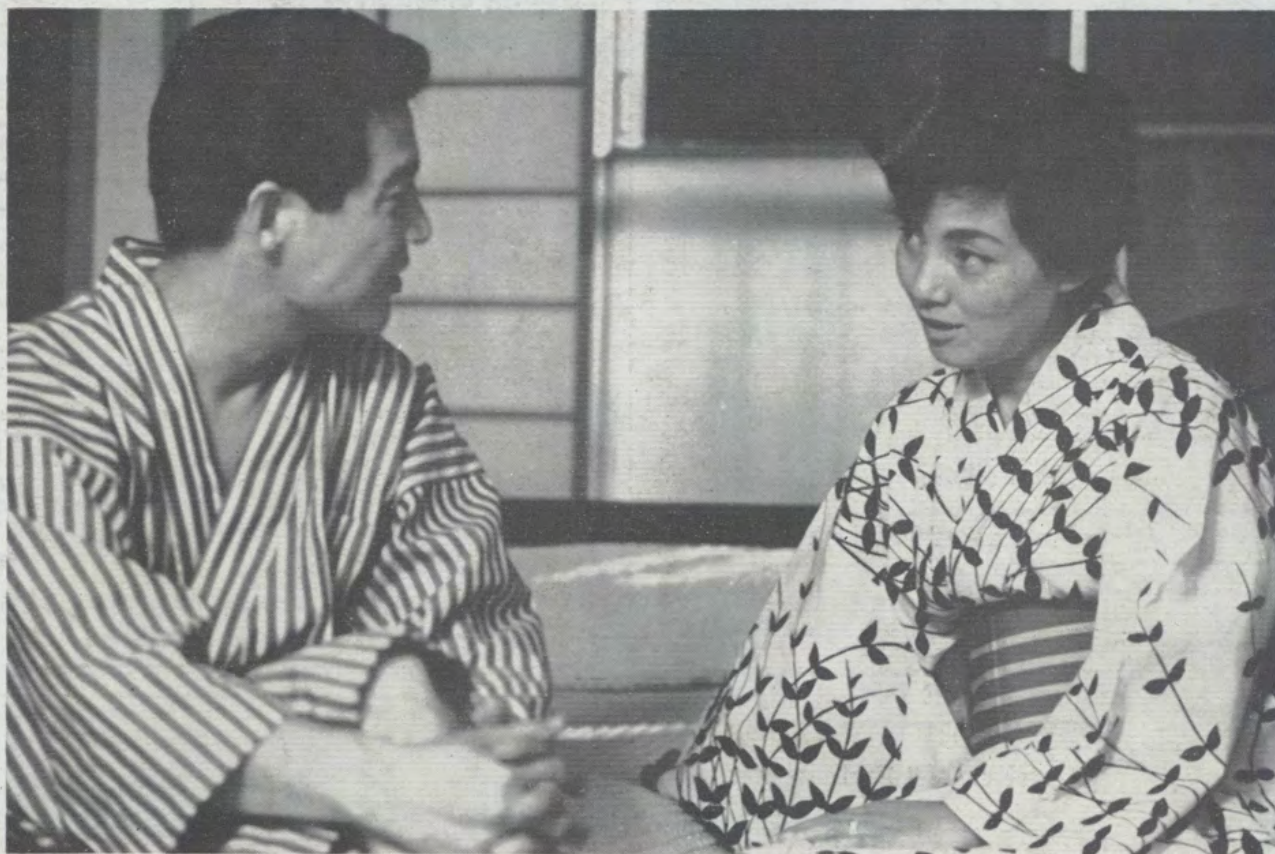
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